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# Letters to an Artist

*Vincent*

It is not by what a man has actually put upon his canvas, nor yet by the acts which he has set down, so to speak, upon the canvas of his life, that I will judge him, but by what he makes me feel that he felt and aimed at.

—SAMUEL BUTLER, *The Way of All Flesh*

# Letters to an Artist

From Vincent van Gogh

to

Anton Ridder van Rappard

1881 - 1885

Translated from the Dutch by Rela van Messel

With an Introduction by Walter Pach

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## Translator's Note

In rendering these letters into English I discovered that a strictly literal translation would be confusing, for van Gogh's peculiar style, to say nothing of many Dutch expressions, is all but untranslatable. Nevertheless, I have kept as close to the text as possible in order to preserve the distinct flavour and vigorous colour of the letters.

Van Gogh's handwriting is also unique: it is uneven and variable, now slanting, now perpendicular, sometimes so small that one has to use a magnifying-glass, at other times, especially when he wishes to give extra emphasis to what he says, unusually thick and large. He habitually used different nibs in the same letter, and frequently it looks as if he had dipped them into India ink, thus making the reading of the next page almost impossible, for he wrote on a certain type of thin ruled paper common in Holland.

Often van Gogh, after concluding a letter, would go back and make additions in tiny script at the end of paragraphs in order to reinforce a statement or to make clearer what he was afraid he had not expressed well enough. Such additions are to be found in nearly every letter; they are typical of him, as are his rugged style and enthusiasm which I have tried to convey. Nothing, however, has been omitted except a few passages of sheer repetition and some lists (literally, catalogue notes) of van Gogh's acquisitions for his print collection.

As most of the letters are undated, the task of arranging them chronologically was extremely difficult, if not impossible; but I

feel that the order in which they here appear will at least not interfere with the reader's sense of continuity.

A casual conversation about the exhibition of van Gogh's works, then current in New York, first revealed to me the existence of the contents of this volume. Closer access to the hitherto unpublished letters of the Dutch artist has only increased my belief in their significance, and I am most happy to see them now made available to the public.

—RELA VAN MESSEL

## Introduction

BY WALTER PACH

IT is not unfitting that the first presentation of the letters of Vincent van Gogh composing the present volume should be made on this side of the Atlantic, his hold on the admiration of Americans having proved a strong one from the very first. Any number of our cities have applied for the loan of that great collection of the painter's work which is travelling about the country as I write these lines, but circumstances have made it necessary to limit the places for the exhibition to New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, San Francisco, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Chicago, Detroit, and Toronto. Even so, with over a hundred thousand visitors in each of the places where the pictures have been shown so far, it is almost certain that more Americans will have attended the exhibition than have ever gathered before to see the production of a single artist.

But American interest in van Gogh is of far earlier date. Well before the Armory Show of 1913 brought to this country a splendid group of his paintings, he was represented in such collections as those of John Quinn and Katherine S. Dreier in New York, and of Sir William Van Horne in Montreal. In 1920 an important showing of his works, from those in the possession of the van Gogh family, was eagerly welcomed in New York. It led to further increases in the number of the artist's paintings and drawings in our collections, public and private. For a number of years two outstanding works by van Gogh, a version of the

*Berceuse* and one of *The Artist's Room at Arles*, have been conspicuous in the fine modern collection at the Art Institute of Chicago, and their presence there is only one more reminder of the long record of Americans in accepting contemporary work at an early time in its rise to recognition.

Doubtless the first item in that record is the admiration for Houdon of Jefferson, Franklin, and others, which resulted in their bringing over to the new Republic the greatest sculptor of his time, in order that he might do the portrait of Washington. With such a start, we need not be surprised at our later history, with its chapters on the collecting which has given us our wealth of works by the Romanticists, the Impressionists, and their successors. We read, for instance, in Charles De Kay's book on Barye that, as early as 1859, William T. Walters was visiting the master in his studio and that, in 1873, he commissioned for Mr. Corcoran of Washington a specimen of every bronze the old sculptor had produced throughout his career. The request, as Mr. Walters told of it, "produced the liveliest effect on the staid countenance of Barye. His eyes filled with tears and he spoke with difficulty: 'Ah, Monsieur Walters! My own country has never done anything like that for me!'" Within a few years of the great man's death, the same American collectors, joined by others, were holding an exhibition in New York to raise funds for the erection of the Barye monument on the Ile St.-Louis, in sight of that studio where, almost thirty years before, Mr. Walters had first visited the artist.

It is not too much to say that the present volume is a contribution to the best of monuments to van Gogh. For the real memorial to creative spirits is their work, and though that of van Gogh is, of course, chiefly what he did in painting, yet his writing is also an expression of his unresting mind.



And, as some of the most valuable of his letters are those to Emile Bernard, a painter-comrade of his years in France, so it is of importance that the world should now be put in possession of a group of letters to a Dutch artist. They are those he wrote to Anton Ridder van Rappard between 1881 and 1885, a period of pivotal influence in his life, for it covers the time from the months when he begins his professional work till nearly the close of that sojourn in his native land which sees the definitive moulding of his character, even if Frenchmen were, shortly later, to furnish him with greatly extended means of expressing his genius.

Before describing more fully the place which the present letters occupy in van Gogh's career, it will be well to account for the fact that they have hitherto been unknown, and not only to the world at large but to nearly everyone in Holland, including even the family of the great painter. His sister-in-law, the widow of that Theodorus van Gogh who supported his brother throughout the years of seemingly hopeless struggle, tells us of the friendship with van Rappard in her biographical introduction to Vincent's letters to his brother. The latter volumes will, of course, remain the greatest literary source of our knowledge of the man (or even of the men, for it is of value to have the clear light they throw on the nobility of Theo's patient and selfless nature as well as on Vincent's own). But if Mrs. van Gogh-Bonger, in the index of names she appends to the volumes, mentions van Rappard in not less than ninety-four instances—very often it is at times when Vincent tells Theo of a letter he had received from his friend or one he had written to him—she never saw the correspondence, evidently, though she quotes extensively from a letter to Vincent's mother which van Rappard wrote just after the death of his comrade.

Five years younger than van Gogh—Anton van Rappard was

born in 1858—he survived him by only two years. In 1892, when van Rappard died, Vincent's rise to fame had not even begun. The young Mrs. van Gogh-Bonger had made a heroic struggle to begin life anew (her husband having followed Vincent to the grave only six months after the latter's death), and it was early enough—indeed within a year of her loss and at a time when her child needed most of her attention—that she began the indomitable effort through which, almost solely, the great painter was to be recognized throughout Europe and America. At the time, his work was considered so utterly devoid of value that she was on several occasions advised to destroy it, so as no longer to have the burden of its care.

It is therefore not surprising that van Rappard made no effort to publish the letters. Let us rather say that it speaks volumes for him that at his death, seven years after the close relationship with Vincent had ended in a misunderstanding, he had preserved the letters with a care that was to continue after he was gone. For he bequeathed them to his friend Johan de Meester, a young writer who had known van Gogh in Paris and who—as Mrs. van Gogh-Bonger records in her diary—had written two articles for the *Courant* of Rotterdam to defend the exhibition she had arranged in that city in 1892. It was the first showing of the artist's work after his death. Precious few were the occasions when any examples of it ever entered exhibitions during his lifetime and so, in that same year, when van Rappard knew that his own death was near, the admiration which Mr. de Meester had expressed for van Gogh at this early date offered the best of reasons for entrusting the precious letters to the care of the writer.

As if fate were intent on signalling the events of this continuing friendship among the three men, Mr. de Meester's own death, in 1931, was due to a sudden heart-attack caused by the effort

he had just made, at the age of seventy-two, in delivering a lecture on the life and art of van Rappard—which had ended almost forty years before. Meanwhile, Mr. de Meester's books had carried him to a foremost rank among the writers of Holland. Decorated by France and Belgium as well as by the Queen of his own land, admired in France where his literary career had begun, and where his books were being read in French translations, he retained the most affectionate memories of the old Bohemian days in Paris and of his friendships there with both of the van Gogh brothers as well as with van Rappard.

In his turn, Mr. de Meester bequeathed Vincent's letters to his wife. Her sister and brother-in-law, Mrs. and Mr. Frank F. Knothe, of Ridgewood, New Jersey, now residing in Winter Park, Florida, noted the interest in van Gogh aroused by the present exhibition and entrusted the letters to the translator, Miss Rela van Messel, through whose work the following pages are finally made known, half a century after they were penned.

One other figure of those great days remains to be presented, one of its few survivors. Vincent alludes to him a number of times in his letters, as when he writes to Theo about "Wenkebach, from Utrecht, who is a friend of Rappard's. He is a landscape painter, and I have often seen his name mentioned; he received a medal in London at the same time as Rappard." This was in 1885. Now, in 1936, the old gentleman (he was born in 1860), in an interview with Mrs. de Meester, confirms the story of his visit to van Gogh, undertaken with the idea of mending the break between the two friends. We read of it in a letter from Vincent to Theo, we find it again here in the letters to van Rappard, and with that, we are, by a fortunate chance, able to append the first-hand account of an actor in the scene who, by the way, is still carrying on as a painter—and with the precious

memory that he succeeded in convincing van Gogh as to van Rappard's friendship, even though the essential part of their correspondence was at its end.

Here is Mr. Wenkebach's account as written by Mrs. de Meester:

"My friend Rappard, being terribly upset at the violent quarrel which had arisen between him and van Gogh, asked me to go and see Vincent and try to bring about a reconciliation. I went to Nuenen, where van Gogh lived, and the visit still stands out vividly in my memory. It was the most remarkable experience I ever had.

"The big room was in a farmhouse of the sexton of the Catholic church. It was crowded with all sorts of articles, spread around in the greatest disorder. The first things my eyes caught were the characteristic, violently painted canvases as well as the expressive drawings which covered the walls. They were most striking. Then I discovered a great many birds' nests and eggs on several tables. Then there were wooden shoes, old caps and bonnets such as the womenfolk wear, some very dirty; old chairs without seats, rickety and broken, and in a corner all sorts of working tools. In a little room at the back sat Vincent before an easel; the room seemed much too small for a studio.

"After shaking hands, it seemed to me as if Vincent was very pleased to see me. He showed me everything and he talked volubly and interestingly about his aim and his work, his difficulties in working with the peasants, and so forth.

"It seemed so strange to me that, although he lived amongst them, he flew into a rage and was so provoked at them. Yet even more he railed against the 'decent' people and the bourgeois, kicking now and then against his easel. During the conversation some

of his drawings fell to the floor and, as I picked them up, my shirt-cuff, which was fastened with a gold cuff-link, showed. Vincent's eye fell on it, and looking at me in a contemptuous manner, he said furiously: 'I can't stand people who wear such luxuries!' This unusual, unkind, and rude remark made me feel most uncomfortable, but I pretended not to notice it and paid no attention to it. Vincent himself forgot it immediately, for in the pleasantest way he proposed that we take a walk through the country.

"It was during this walk that he gave me a glimpse of his sublime soul, his sensitive artistic feeling; he noticed all the colours, the delicate atmosphere, the bright sun and mighty clouds, the crops, the shady trees; he was full of enthusiasm about all the beauty of the country, every detail of light and shade on cottage and field, and so on. I felt that I had met a mighty artist!

"This seemed to me the right moment to bring up the subject that had brought me there, and Vincent seemed also to have read my thoughts, for he told me how often he had walked there with van Rappard, and how he regretted their variance about his drawings.

"I then replied: 'Anton did not intend to hurt you, but spoke his meaning freely as a friend to a friend, and he apologizes to you.'

"'Well, if he takes back what he said, it is all right,' Vincent replied, and we dropped the subject.

"The road on which we were walking was deeply furrowed, and taking the smoother side, I said: 'Won't you walk behind instead of beside me? The road is so rough and uneven.'

"Vincent answered: 'No, thank you. It is not good to take the smooth path in one's life! I never do!'

"That same day we dined at the house of one of van Gogh's friends in Eindhoven, and during dinner I talked about the

French painter Stengelin, whom I had met in Drenthe. I mentioned that the peasants there did not like Stengelin. Imagine our consternation when Vincent suddenly flew into a rage, threw down his fork, cursed the peasants, and left the room!

"There we sat. I was dumbfounded, but my host, knowing these fits of anger, did not seem to mind and said good-naturedly: 'Oh, he is all right, just don't mind, he'll turn up again.'

"And indeed he did; just as I had arrived at the station to take the train back to Utrecht, van Gogh appeared to bid me farewell, and as the train moved out of the station, he said, waving his hand:

" 'I hope you'll soon come again!' "

But it is time to get back to the circumstances under which the letters between the two painters were exchanged, and to see what connexion there is between these pages and the life of the great man.

In the fall of 1880, Vincent left Cuesmes, the village in the Borinage, the mining country of Belgium, whither he had gone as a lay preacher of the gospel. It was there that, at the age of twenty-seven, his vocation as a painter had become clear to him, after his earlier time as the employee of a firm of art dealers and then as a candidate for the ministry, whose zeal prevented his finishing theological study in order that he might hasten forth into the active service of the Church. All the fervour of the man who had so heroically shared the lot of the miners is now concentrated in art, which he realizes to be his life work.

The village in which he had been living offers no possibilities for an art student, so Vincent betakes himself to Brussels, the nearest capital. "He is longing to see pictures again," writes Mrs. van Gogh-Bonger, "but above all he hopes to become acquainted

with artists. Deep in his heart there was such a great longing for sympathy, for kindness and friendship, and though his difficult character generally prevented him from finding this and left him isolated in life, yet he always kept on longing for somebody with whom he could live and work.

“Theo, who meanwhile had acquired a good position in Paris, could now assist him in word and deed. He brought Vincent into relation with the young Dutch painter van Rappard, who had worked some time in Paris and now studied at the Academy at Brussels. At first the acquaintance did not progress, for the outward difference between the rich young nobleman and the neglected wanderer from the Borinage was too great for the acquaintance to ripen into friendship; yet the artistic taste and opinions of both were too similar for them not to find each other; a friendship arose—perhaps the only one that Vincent ever had in Holland—it lasted for five years and then was broken through a misunderstanding, which van Rappard always regretted, though he acknowledged that intercourse with Vincent was very difficult.”

Mrs. van Gogh-Bonger then quotes from van Rappard's letter to Vincent's mother previously alluded to: “I remember as if it happened only yesterday the moment of our first meeting at Brussels when he came into my room at nine o'clock in the morning, how at first we did not get on very well together, but so much the better after we had worked together a few times.” And again she quotes: “Whoever has witnessed this wrestling, struggling, and sorrowful existence could not but feel sympathy for the man who demanded so much of himself that it ruined body and mind. He belonged to the race that produces the great artists.

“Though Vincent and I were separated the last years by a

misunderstanding which I have often regretted, I have never ceased to remember him, and the time we spent together, with great sympathy.

“Whenever in the future I shall remember that time, and it is always a delight for me to recall the past, the characteristic figure of Vincent will appear to me in such a melancholy but clear light, the struggling and wrestling, fanatic, gloomy Vincent, who used to flare up so often and was so irritable, but who still deserved friendship and admiration for his noble mind and highly artistic qualities.’ ”

Van Gogh's life was torn with trouble, dissension, and ills of body and mind, largely due to privation. So that the description of him we get from van Rappard at this time might well be carried on to the fatal day, five years after the misunderstanding, when Vincent turned his revolver upon himself to end the problem of his afflictions, when they seemed to be renewing their violence. But between-times there were glorious days of fruitful work, and the sunlight which suffuses his pictures, as it does few others in the whole range of painting, also lit up the sombreness of mind of which his friend makes mention.

It must be remembered that, at the time when van Rappard describes him, he had just emerged from the inner conflict which resulted in his abandoning the ministry, a calling traditional in his family and one which his father and grandfather had followed amid the love and admiration of their people. For a man of Vincent's iron tenacity, it meant much—as he got on toward his thirtieth year—to leave his chosen profession and enter another, one fraught with perhaps more difficulty than any other. I do not refer to it so because of the artist's scant possibility of earning (Vincent had to eat the bread of his younger brother throughout his whole life as a painter—though Theo



gave it with joy and the most delicate tact); what made up the real problem of van Gogh's career was finding the true line of effort along the technical lines of his work. His fierce sincerity forbade the most trifling compromise, and he spoke his mind in the letters to his comrade with a bluntness that hardly seems exaggerated when we consider what the man was going through.

Briefly, these years are marked, in his outward life, by grave differences with his family, which, although unused to his manner of life and troubled as to his future, still treats him with all the consideration it can. Besides, this is the time of Vincent's hopeless love for a woman whose harsh refusal of his advances leaves him a prey to his need for companionship, and so to the unhappy venture with the model he took, with her children, to live with him.

This incident, covered by the letters to van Rappard, should be seen in the perspective of his life, with its continued longing for the normal human relationships that were denied him. It is characteristic that, as Mrs. van Gogh-Bonger relates, his deepest regret at the time of his final separation from the woman is over losing sight of the little boy to whom "he had become attached as if it were his own child." Is it any wonder that his friend remembers him as irritable and gloomy? Opinion among conventional people in The Hague as to the affair with the model (she was, in reality, a weak and vulgar person, in no way worthy of his devotion) was so severe that Vincent questions whether van Rappard will not be swayed by it; and the lack of understanding of his work by artists and dealers, added to the reprobation of his acquaintances, caused him to go to Drenthe, where he hoped, in vain, to meet the able German painter Max Liebermann, who was working in Holland at the time. Again the need for friendship, and for art!

He then goes to live with his parents at Nuenen; but in less than a year and a half his father dies very suddenly and the home is broken up. We follow him at this time (1885) in the letters to van Rappard and can understand the exasperated susceptibility that took amiss such small matters as the letter of condolence about his father.

The cause of the break, however, is not to be found in trifles, even if connected with the same letter; differences of ideas on essential questions, those of the life work of the two young men, were the real cause. Van Rappard, as his work shows, was conventional and submissive to the authority that his timid, if sincere, nature was willing to accord to the school. Vincent, five years older and immeasurably more experienced, knowing from his contact with religion and society the way in which life overrides rules, is continually urging his friend in these letters to go beyond narrow and artificial definitions of technique, and to base his work on his sensations of the world and its needs. Stung to resentment at last by this criticism, van Rappard writes an ill-considered letter containing remarks on Vincent's own work that would have been deeply offensive to anyone.

That van Gogh could stand objections, even at this difficult time in his life, is proved by the following lines from *De Amsterdammer*, a weekly paper quoted by Mrs. van Gogh-Bonger in telling of the memories of Vincent retained by Mr. Kersemakers, whom our artist had initiated into painting. In 1912, relating his first visit (in 1885) to van Gogh's studio, he writes about the pictures of peasants, "heads of men and women whose Negro-like, turned-up noses, projecting jaw-bones, and large ears were strongly accentuated, the fists callous and furrowed," details which strongly remind us of van Rappard's own impressions. Of a second visit Mr. Kersemakers says: "I thought in my

ignorance that he [Vincent] could not draw, or totally neglected the drawing of the figures, and I took the liberty of telling him straight out. I did not make him angry, he only laughed and said: 'You will think differently about it later on.'"

But what could be taken with a smile coming, as it did, from a simple tanner whom Vincent had but lately induced to take an interest in art (with characteristic zeal for the spreading of his faith, he had a whole group of the villagers working with him) was a serious matter coming from van Rappard, an educated man and an artist. Vincent sends back his letter with a single line to express his amazement at it. The other, realizing that he had gone to unjustifiable lengths, apologizes, both at first hand and through his friend Wenkebach.

It is a satisfaction to know that matters were mended: Vincent writes to Theo of the letter he has sent van Rappard, after Wenkebach's visit, saying that artists must unite against their common enemy, the ignorance and indifference of the public. But that union, which Vincent hoped for till the last weeks of his life, was one of the mirages of his generous mind. In the case of van Rappard and himself the separation was too deep for the closing of a surface break to permit a genuine continuance of the relationship. It had begun in the days when Vincent worked in the young nobleman's studio, since his own small bedroom made painting there an impossibility; the friendship had gone on with van Rappard's kindly offers of money, and with his visits to the parsonage where the van Goghs made him so welcome; now came the end of the letters, though not, as we have seen, of friendly feelings on both sides.

Something should be said here of van Gogh's ideas of art at the time of the correspondence. Much of it turns around the collecting of woodcuts from the illustrated papers of the period,

and here we see an effect of Vincent's previous experience as an employee of the firm of Goupil, where he had sold paintings and engravings of the same type as those represented in the various papers he pursues so eagerly—being now himself a collector, almost like the rich people he formerly served. If certain of those draughtsmen of the seventies and eighties are still remembered, if some are indeed the object of admiration and study today (when, precisely, the Metropolitan Museum in New York has been holding an exhibition of illustrations by Boyd Houghton, many of which Vincent mentions), other men he admired have ceased to be of any interest, and the school in general, with its literal exactitude, has been superseded by photography, which is so incomparably better equipped by speed, fullness of detail, and cheapness to do the work of journalistic recording which so largely occupied those old illustrators.

But Vincent observes, and correctly, that they go beyond mere representation and, to the end of his life, he will continue to defend the expression of ideas, as he did in the discussions with artists of which we read in the present letters. In the isolation of the Dutch villages where he lived, the coming of the illustrated papers was a precious link with the world of art. At a dark moment, his mother writes: "I am glad that we regularly get books from the reading club; the illustrations in the magazines interest him most, and then there is the *Nouvelle Revue*, etc.; every week something new is a great pleasure to him."

His thankfulness for things that keep his own work strongly before his eyes (he even hopes that he himself may live by illustrating) is a sufficient explanation why he does not always discriminate between first- and second-rate production, or even between sentiment and sentimentality. The fierceness with which he replies to a criticism of Millet is a measure of his unquestion-

ing loyalty to that magnificent artist—and permits us to understand how even a pale reflection of Millet's luminous depth, as in the derivative and commonplace painting of Lhermitte, could be accepted by him. It has often been observed that the creative man, though the final judge of art in its big divisions into good and bad, will sometimes be influenced as to matters of detail by men who are near him, either personally (as in the case of pupils) or through a following of ideas or technical investigation that he feels to be needed. This explains, for example, Delacroix's praise of a small man like Charlet and his mentions of the young Meissonier, whose later development must have been as unacceptable to him as to the world which has relegated it to its inferior place.

Van Gogh's early enthusiasms are also to be read of in the light of the great work he did later on. Paris showed him not merely how to get luminosity from deeper and richer sources than he had known before—those of colour instead of the black-and-white he used in Holland; it taught him to make the whole structure of his painting, design as well as colour, expressive of that sense of humanity, its tragedy, its triumphs, and its relation to the earth and the sun and the great spaces, which he carries on from Rembrandt, the master of his land in the past, which he passes on to the masters of the future, who so eagerly learn from his work.



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❖1881❖

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Etten, October 12, 1881.

DEAR RAPPARD,

Just received *Gavarni, l'Homme et l'Œuvre*, my thanks for returning it. To my mind Gavarni is a very great artist and certainly also very interesting as a man. No doubt he has now and then done things that were not right, as in the case of his conduct towards Thackeray and Dickens, but many people do things like that.

He seems to have regretted what he did, because some time later he sent drawings to people he had not treated very kindly. And Thackeray himself had behaved likewise towards Balzac, and even went further I believe, and it does not take away from the fact that these men at heart were men of genius, even if it was not always clear to themselves.

When I received the book this morning, I said to myself: "Now Rappard is not coming himself, otherwise he would have brought it with him when he came." I do not think it is necessary to say again that we shall all be happy to have you with us once more, and we do hope that, even if you do not stay very long, you won't stay away altogether.

I am also anxious to hear what your plans are for the winter. If you do go to Antwerp, Brussels, or Paris, won't you anyway stay over *en passant*? And if you remain in Holland, then I shan't give up hope. It is beautiful here in the winter, and we could do something, if not outside then we could work with a model indoors, for example, in the cottage of some peasant or other.

I have been drawing with models a good deal lately; I found a couple of very willing models. So I have all sorts of diggers and sowers, etc., men and women. I have used charcoal a good deal and just now am using *conté* as well as sepia and water-colour. *Enfin*, I dare not say that you'll find I have made progress, but you surely will find that there is a decided change.

Pretty soon I'll pay another visit to Mauve, to have a talk with him about the question as to whether or not I shall go on with my painting. If I start it, then I shall continue it. But I want to talk it over first with certain people. I am more and more pleased that I have set my mind on the drawing of figures. Indirectly it helps the landscape because it teaches such concentration.

I should have liked to send you a few sketches if I had the time, but I am so busy with all sorts of things; however, later on I'll send you some.

In case you are not going to be in these parts, I'd be much obliged if you gave me your address, as I feel sure I shall have quite a lot of things to tell you this winter. Do you mind if I keep your Karl Robert's *Le Fusain* a little while longer? I'd like to have it now that I am working with charcoal; I need it very much, and when I go to The Hague I shall try to get a copy myself. I'll be very much surprised if I don't stay right here in Etten all winter. I am planning to do it anyway. It is certain that I am not going abroad this year because I have been rather lucky since I came back to Holland, not only with my drawing but also with other things. *Enfin*, I am going to continue here at present. I have been so much in other countries, in England as well as in France and Belgium, that it is high time I remained here. Do you know what is so superb these days? The road to the station and to de Leur with those old knot-willows. You have a sepia of it yourself. I cannot tell you how beautiful the trees are just now! I made about seven large studies of





them, with the most wonderful stems. I know that if you could come down now while the leaves are falling, even if it were only for a week, you would make something beautiful of it. If you care to come, you know we'll all be delighted to have you.

The kindest regards from my parents and a handclasp from me, believe me,

*t. à t.,*<sup>1</sup>

VINCENT.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tout à toi*, literally "all yours."

*Etten, October 15, 1881.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

Your letter, it seems to me, must be answered on the spot. First of all, you must know that it interested me very much, more than any letter I have received from you; I read more into it perhaps than you meant or intended to say.

I read in it: "My friend Rappard has made a great step forward, or will do that shortly." Why so? Yes, that does not really matter. I have reason to believe that you have reached a point of revolt and reform. *Ça ira!* In a short while there will be a fire of enthusiasm in you. *Ça ira!* But not another word about it in this letter.

If you are perhaps surprised about what I told you, then I hope to be able to tell you more about it soon, when I see you, for I expect to see you soon anyway whether you come by way of Breda or Rosendaal.

First of all I want to ask you, also at the request of my parents, to come and visit us, for either a long or a short time. Therefore it is not necessary for you to ask if your visit will be convenient. You need only write me the time of your arrival, in case you are coming, and I'll be at the station to meet you.

If it is impossible for you to come and stay a few days, then I shall count on your stopping over for a few hours, maybe in the station at Breda or Rosendaal; so let me know, by letter or post card, the hour and place of your arrival.



I'll bring a few drawings along with me, the big one, *Worn Out*, and several others that you don't know yet. I do not need to tell you that I hope you'll be sure to show me at the same time some of your water-colours, for I am very anxious to see them. Look, we really must agree to meet somehow or other one of these days. There is only one thing that might possibly prevent me from coming to the station on the day you are passing through, and it is most unlikely that it should happen on just that day. It is like this: Mauve is coming to Prinsenhage for a day, and will also be spending a day with us here. We hope it will be soon, but we are not quite sure which day it will be. And when Mauve is here, I go where *Mauve* goes. Suppose you came here at the same time as he, would you find that very disagreeable? I don't think you would. I'm not sure whether you know him personally, but either a first or a renewed meeting would be very good for you, I should think. Mauve put heart into me when I needed it most awfully—he is a man of genius.

Well, so you are thinking seriously of going to Brussels to paint from the nude until Christmas? I can understand it, in your case, especially now that I know what mood you are in, and I shall see you go there very calmly and peacefully. *Ce qui doit arriver, arrivera.*

Whether you go to Brussels or not, some new flame will flare up in you. *Ça ira*, and it will not make much difference whether you go or not, but a caterpillar will become a butterfly. I speak like this as a companion in the same adventure.

Let me tell you this: in coming to Etten for a few days, don't think that you will be guilty of neglecting your work. On the contrary, you can look upon it as performing your duty, because neither you nor I would sit still. You can really do some figure drawing here if you care to.

I'm not sure whether I told you that my uncle in Prinsenhage

saw the little sketches in your letter, and thought they were very good. He noticed with delight that you were making progress in figures as well as in landscapes.

I really feel, Rappard, that you ought to work with models who wear *clothes*. Of course, one must know the nude thoroughly—that's indispensable—but still, in reality we have to consider the clothed figure, unless we intend to follow Baudry, Lefèvre, Henner, who specialize in the nude. In that case you should study the nude exclusively, and the more you concentrate on it the better for you.

But I do not think that will be your only direction. You have too much feeling for other things. You like a little woman picking up potatoes in a field, a digger, or a sower, or a little lady in the street or in her home. They are too beautiful for you to want to attack them differently from the way you have done down to the present. You have too much feeling for colour and too much sentiment for tone for that. You are too much a landscape painter to go the way of Baudry.

The more so because I believe that you too, Rappard, will decide to stay in Holland. You are too much of a *Hollander* to become a Baudry. But I think it is excellent that you paint such beautiful nude studies. Those two big ones that I know—the reclining pose and the brown seated figure—I wish I had done myself. I am telling you my thoughts frankly, and I want you to keep on telling me openly and frankly what you think.

Your remark about the figure of the *Sower*, that he is not a man who sows, but a man who is posing as a sower, is very true. I look upon my studies at present only as studies after a model. They have no pretensions to being anything else. Only after a year or a couple of years shall I come to make a sower who sows; there I agree entirely with you.

You tell me, Rappard, that you haven't done anything in fourteen days. I know such "fourteen days" so well. I know I felt like that last summer. I did not draw anything directly. Indirectly I did what I did—they are a kind of transformation period.

I saw Mesdag's<sup>1</sup> *Panorama*. I was there with the painter de Bock, who worked on it and who told me of an incident that took place after the *Panorama* was finished, and which I thought quite entertaining.

Perhaps you know the painter de Stree. *Entre nous, soit dit*, a real incarnation of mealy-mouthed pedantry. Well, this gentleman came up to de Bock one day and, with a patronizing air, said to him in a very milk-soppy, superior, pedantic manner: "De Bock, they asked me too to work on this panorama, but because it is something inartistic, I refused." At that, de Bock replied: "Mr. de Stree, which is easier, to refuse to paint a panorama, or not to refuse? Which is more artistic, to do something or not to do anything?" I thought this answer very much to the point.

I have good news from my brother Theo. He sends you his best regards. Do keep up his acquaintance and write to him now and then. He is a clever, energetic fellow, and I am so sorry that he is not a painter, although it is good for the painters that there are such men as he. You'll find that out if you keep up your acquaintance with him.

And now I'll say *au revoir*, shall I? And believe me, with a hand-clasp in thought,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

I am looking for a poem, I think by Tom Hood, "The Song of

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<sup>1</sup> The painter Mesdag created a huge circular seascape, which, to carry out the illusion, had actual sand dunes, marine life, etc., placed before it.

the Shirt." Perhaps you know it, or could you get it for me? If you know it, I should like to ask you to write it out for me some time.

After I had closed this letter I opened it once more to tell you that, although I understand you have made your plans, I do want you to leave them open for consideration before you put them into effect.

Let me speak openly to you, and let me say this: "Rappard, stay here."

Of course, there may be circumstances of which I am ignorant, and which weigh in the scale for your decision. Therefore, I am speaking only from an artist's point of view. In my opinion, you, as a Hollander, will feel more at home in a Dutch atmosphere, and you will feel more satisfied if you work according to the nature of our own country (whether it be in figure or landscape) than if you concentrate or specialize in the nude. However much I like Baudry and others, like Lefèvre and Henner, I prefer Jules Breton, Feyen-Perrin, Millet, Butin, Mauve, Artz, Israels, etc., etc. And if you allow me to say so, I really think that this is also your attitude, as you will realize if you give the matter serious thought. Although you have seen much, I too have surely seen a great deal of art and, although I am only a beginner in the art of drawing, my eye for it, generally speaking, is good, and you must not take it lightly when I occasionally say these things. And I think we both cannot do better than to paint Dutch scenery (figure and landscape). Then we are ourselves, then we feel at home, then we are in our element. The more we know what is happening abroad, the better; but we must not forget that our roots are in Dutch soil.

If I am not mistaken, you are making great progress with Mr.

and Mrs. Lansheer. I really am happy to know that he spoke to you about your picture in Arti.<sup>1</sup> He is a man who looks at art from a broad point of view. There are not many who have such knowledge and taste as he.

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<sup>1</sup> The famous Dutch salon.

Etten, November 2, 1881.

DEAR RAPPARD,

Thanks for your quick reply. Well, you succeeded fast enough in finding rooms that let you live in the neighbourhood of the Academy.

With reference to a certain question that I noticed at the bottom of your post card, I do want to tell you that it is far from my mind to say that it is stupid of you to go to the "sanctuary." I think you are very wise, yes even so wise that I am tempted to say a little *too wise*, too conscientious.

I would have been glad if you had not gone; if nothing had come of this expedition; in my opinion, *tant mieux*; but now that you have made up your mind, I want to wish you success with all my heart, and indeed I do not doubt that it will have a good effect on you—*quand même*.

*You*—and others with you—are in my eyes not academic in the despicable sense of the word, although you are actually studying at the Academy. I do not look upon you as one of those pedantic persons whom we might call the Pharisees of art, of which Father Stallaert<sup>1</sup> is a typical example. And even this man may have a good side; perhaps if I knew him better I might think differently about him, but it would be difficult to persuade me not to think that His Honour has not a damned bad side, which eclipses his possible good qualities. Nothing pleases me more than to discover such good

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<sup>1</sup> A professor at the Academy.

qualities even in that kind of person. It always hurts me, it makes me nervous, when I meet somebody about whose principles I have to say: "But that is neither good nor bad, that really does not look like anything"—and it gives me a sort of choking feeling that stays with me, till some day I find out he has something good in him.

You must not think that I am happy when I find that something is wrong. It saddens me and gives me so much sorrow that I usually cannot keep it to myself; *ça m'agace*. I am not happy when I discover that I still have a beam in my own eye; all the same, I have found them there, and when that was the case, I did not leave it at that, but looked for a cure. —

Because I know from my own experience how terrible it is to have such a beam in one's eye, I cannot keep cool when I see that others suffer from the same disease.

You must not think that I am so obstinate, a "party man." I have dared to take sides, just like any other man; one has to do that in life and *has to come out in the open*, and not be afraid to give one's opinion about certain things and then stick to them.

But as I have trained myself to look at things, first from the positive, good side, and then, after that, from the negative side, even if *à contre-cœur*, I feel sure that I shall eventually arrive (even if I haven't already done so) at a really broad, unprejudiced viewpoint. For that reason it is for me a *petite misère de la vie humaine* to find someone who thinks he is always right and wants everyone to think of him as such in everything. That is why I say that I am so sure of my own mistaken viewpoint but also of the fallibility of all children of mankind.

Now I believe you also are trying to find the aforementioned viewpoint as to things in life and especially in art; therefore it is far from my mind to call you a Pharisee, either in the moral or artistic sense. But that does not take away from the fact that people

like you and me who have decidedly honest intentions are still not perfect. Often such people make serious mistakes; and do not forget that we are influenced by our own environment and circumstances. We are deceiving ourselves if we think that we are standing so firm in our shoes that we do not need to pay attention to dangers that may befall us. You and I may think we stand firmly on our feet, in a certain sense, but *malheur à nous* if we become foolhardy and careless, simply because we possess more or less good qualities.

To attach ourselves too much to the good in ourselves leads us surely to Pharisaism, if this is really in us.

When you are making vigorous studies of the nude, whether it is at the Academy or somewhere else—like the ones I saw—and when I am drawing potato-diggers in a field, let us take it for granted that this is a good thing and that we are making progress, but I think we should be on our guard, *not in spite* of that but *because* of that. We must not have too much confidence in ourselves even if we discover that we are on the right track; we should say to ourselves: “*Let me take care now, for I am just the kind of person to spoil my own chances when they seem good—let me take care.*”

“How must we take care??? This I cannot define, but what I do know is that we have to be careful in such cases, because I know from experience; through hurt feelings and bitter shame I have become aware of what I underlined above. Even the knowledge of my own fallibility cannot keep me from making mistakes; only when I fall do I get up again. . . .)

Just because I have confidence in you, I think it is splendid that you are painting the nude at the Academy. I know that you won't be self-righteous, like the Pharisees, and you won't look on those



whose views differ from yours as nobodies. Your work more than anything else has convinced me of this.

I drew a potato-digger again today, and since you were last here I have also done a boy with a scythe, a man and a woman sitting near a fire.

We all enjoyed your visit, and I am glad that I saw your water-colours; you have certainly made a great step forward.

Still, I would like to see you paint and draw common people with their clothes on. I feel sure you'll do it very well I remember so well the curate you drew during the sermon of the Rev. Dr. Kam. I haven't seen any drawings like that one from you and I really regret it. But perhaps you have been converted since and listen now more to the sermon and do not pay attention to the people or the preacher. Sometimes a speaker carries us so with him that we forget everything around us—I wonder if this is possible in church? I wish it were so. . . .

Well, here's hoping you'll write soon, and I wish you good luck in Brussels. On your return trip you must surely stay over again; let's take that for granted from the beginning.

Kind regards also from my parents and a handclasp from me. Believe me, always yours,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

*Etten, November 21, 1881.*

DEAR RAPPARD,

To talk less abstractly for once, I am going to speak to you about some matter-of-fact things. You said that ten Cate spoke to you just as I did. *Que soit*, but if Mr. ten Cate is the man I saw one day for a moment in your studio, then I doubt very much that he and I have fundamentally the same ideas. Is he a rather short man with black or dark-brown hair and a pale face? At that time he was very neatly dressed in a black suit. You know that I am always taking notice of a man's natural make-up in order to find out his trend of thought. But I only saw this gentleman once—if I ever did see him—and it was a very casual meeting, so I cannot size him up very well. All the same it is quite possible that he has spoken to you just as I do about certain matters. I have nothing against that, *tant mieux*. Although your answer to my letter is not more than a half-answer, I wish to thank you for it just the same. You'll give me the other half some other time, but not yet. The other half, still to come, will be much longer and much more satisfactory.

When the time comes for you to leave the Academy for good, then I feel sure you'll have to wrestle with a very difficult and peculiar situation, which, even now, is not quite unfamiliar to you.

A man like you, who is regularly working at the Academy, will feel more or less out of his element when he has to find his own daily work, or rather has to create it himself, instead of having it

put before him as his daily task, and this searching for it yourself is not altogether easy. At least it would not surprise me if now and then, when you have left the Academy for good, you felt as if the ground was giving way from under your feet. But you are not the man, I think, who will feel alarmed by this natural reaction, and you'll soon regain your balance. But when you have thrown yourself once and for all head over heels into reality—and if you do this, without keeping a back door open, there is no possible turning back—then you'll speak exactly as ten Cate does and as I do to those who swear by the Academy. From what you told me of your conversation with ten Cate, it comes to this: he said: "Rappard, do not keep a sling round your arm, throw yourself into reality, head over heels."

"The open sea" is your real element, and even at the Academy you do not belie your true character and nature, and that is the reason that those gentlemen of the Academy won't entirely recognize you, why they send you off with an old woman's tale.

Mr. ten Cate, and especially I myself, we are not yet on top, and we know that we cannot yet move and manœuvre as we should like, but that does not take away from the fact that, if we are never thrown against the rocks or buffeted by breakers, we'll not become real sailors. And there is no mercy for us; everyone has to go through a period of worry and struggle if he wants to go into real deep water. First we catch very few or no fish at all, but we get to know the fairway and learn to steer our boat, which surely is of great importance. And after a while we'll have a marvellous catch and big ones I tell you!!

But I am afraid that Mr. ten Cate is after other fish than am I, but this is a question of temperament; besides, it is the privilege of every fisherman to have his specialty, but somehow a fish of a different kind comes into the net and gets mixed up with your

kind, and then you can say there is a similarity between the two catches.

Well, you sometimes dislike sowers and diggers, seamstresses, and so on. *Que soit*, I too feel like that myself sometimes, but this dislike is far outweighed by my enthusiasm, but with you the two things seem to be of the same weight.

If you keep my letters and happen to have a spare moment, unless they have perished in the flames, I'd like to say: reread them. I hope it does not sound too pretentious to ask such a thing of you. However, it was in real earnest that I wrote them and I am not ashamed of having wagged my tongue and having given free rein to my fancy.

Well, you are saying that I am really too insistent and that I am most certainly proclaiming a doctrine. All right, if you want to take it that way, let it be so; if necessary I'll say nothing to contradict you, I am not ashamed of my feelings—*je ne rougis point d'être homme, d'avoir des principes et une foi*. But where do I want to lead the people? and especially myself? I show the open sea—and what doctrine do I preach? "People, let us give our soul to our work and let us work with our heart for our cause and—love what we love." TO LOVE WHAT WE LOVE, what a superfluous warning that seems, and still what an enormous significance it has!!! How many people still give their best efforts to something that is unworthy, treating that which they love as a step-child, instead of surrendering themselves frankly to the irresistible impulse of their hearts? And then we think that such conduct shows "firmness of character" and a "strong mind," and we spend our strength on somebody unworthy, and our true love we neglect, while we do it all with the "holiest purpose," thinking "we must do it" out of "conscientious conviction" and out of a "sense of duty." Thus we have the "beam in our own eye," confusing a *quasi* or would-be

conscience with our real conscience. The person who is writing this moment to his friend Rappard has long marched in this world with one, yes, perhaps several such beams of colossal size in his eye. Has he got rid of them? you ask. Well, what shall he answer you? Of one thing the writer of this is certain, that one big one is out, provisionally, but because he had not noticed this one when he was labouring with it, he does not think it quite impossible that there may be others of whose existence he is unaware. However, the aforementioned person has learned to be on his *qui-vive* against eye-infections, beams, etc. The one in question was of a rather in-artistic nature, and he is not going to tell you what the kind was. There are all sorts, and they are artistic, theological, moral ones (a quantity of the latter), practical and theoretical ones (when these last two are combined it is almost fatal!), and . . . *enfin*, many more.

Therefore, it must not upset us too much to discover that we are not without them, provided that our equanimity does not tend to make us careless or indifferent or stubborn.

A few days ago I received a nice letter from my brother Theo; he inquired after you. I had sent him a few drawings, and he advised me strongly to continue with my Brabant types. He always says such forceful things about art, and his hints are very useful and practical, as well as feasible.

Today I have again driven out my *bête noire*; I mean the system of resignation. It seems to me that this *bête noire* belongs to the race of the hydra. I mean, the more heads you cut off, the more grow again. All the same there have been people who have been able to smash the thing. My favourite occupation in my spare moments is to fight this old *bête noire* of mine.

Perhaps you are unaware of the fact that in theology there is such a thing as resignation. It has a side branch, mortification. And

if this were only an imaginary thing, or if it existed only in the writings or sermons of the theologians, I assure you I would not worry about it, but it is one of those horrible burdens the theologians have put on the shoulders of the people and which they themselves won't even touch with their fingers. So, alas, resignation belongs to the land of reality and causes a number of the *petites misères de la vie humaine*.

When, however, they wanted to put such a yoke on my shoulders, I told them: "Damn it, get out!" And they thought that was terribly disrespectful. Well—*que soit*—whatever the purpose of resignation, I think it is only for those who *can* resign themselves, and belief is for those who *can* believe, and what can I do if I was not born for resignation but for belief, and for doing the work that lies along my road? Well, if you have a moment to spare sometimes, you must write to me, and in the meantime, with a handclasp, believe me,

t. à t.,

VINCENT.

*Etten, November 23, 1881.*

DEAR RAPPARD,

Rereading your letters, old boy, I find some very bright lines in them and—I must tell you this—things that pique me into continuing our correspondence.

So! You really think I am a driver! Well, suppose I admit that; you have hit me off correctly! *Que soit!* I thank you for the revelation. Yes, at first I did not dare to believe it, but you made it clear to me, so I have a *will*, a *direction*, I am following a *definite path* and, what is more, I want to take others along with me! Thank God that I am a driver! Well, I don't want to be anything else in the future and I would like to have my friend Rappard as my travelling companion. It is not an indifferent matter for me to lose sight of him—do you think that's wrong of me?

Well, in my hurry I said that I wanted to drive people to “the open sea” (look into my last letter again). If I had done only that, then I should be a regular barbarian; there is more than that to the matter, something that makes the whole business more reasonable. In the long run a man cannot stay out on the open sea continuously; he has to have a little hut on the shore, with a little fire in the chimney—and a wife and children round it.

Look, Rappard, whither I am driving myself, and where I am trying to drive others. We must become FISHERMEN IN THE OCEAN OF REALITIES, but there must be “the little hut” for myself as well as for those whose path I cross, and in the hut there must be what

I told you we need. So there must be the sea and the resting-place or the resting-place and the sea.

The doctrine that I preach, "People, let us love what we love," has its root in an axiom. I did not intend to call it that myself, but in order to be specific I'll call it that now. The axiom is this: "People, we have a thing called love." From this I draw my first conclusion, "People, let us love what we love," let us be *ourselves*. Also, "Don't let us think we know things better than God does." This last expression is not mine but Mauve's. And I prove the axiom from the "indirect demonstration" of it.

Suppose a man did not love what he loves, what a lot of trouble he would make for himself and for others and what an unrest he would create in the world for instance. To put it briefly, if all people were like the person just described, imagining such a one to be possible, how upside down this man would make the world, which has been created by our Lord in the proper way, and which He keeps so, at least, I think, as long as we live in it, and probably for ever after. But in a case such as I have imagined, the world would be all upside down and inside out, and fortunately we need to think of that merely as an abstraction. If in our imagination we were going to proceed for a moment to such an abstraction, we would find that we were rowing against the tide, and that we had pretty well proved the reasonableness of our axiom: Let us love what we love. . . . (If I have not given enough proof of the logic of this axiom, perhaps you, who are much further advanced in mathematics than I, can find better proof for my hypothesis.)

We come now to extraordinary conclusions or inferences, e.g.:

(1) A man who absolutely refuses to love what he loves dooms himself.

(2) He has to have a damned lot of obstinacy to hold out in the long run.



(3) *If* he should change, wouldn't his conversion be tremendous! Yes, and whether or not I add a point that I am more or less insinuating, I think you grasp it, Rappard: by holding on to the Academy you are keeping a sling around your arm, which has strangled many a one who couldn't free himself when he wanted to. But as you have rather strong muscles, *you* will be able to loosen the noose in time of need, I think. But otherwise! Believe me there are many who strangle themselves like that!

Are there, besides the academic slings, others? Look up the chapter of beams in the eye in my earlier letters. There are as many kinds of beams in the eye as there are slings around the arm.

How many?

*Legions, I say, legions!!!*

To be strangled thus is much slower and by far more terrible than simply to hang oneself.

And there are also moral slings round the arm, and why not, just as there are moral beams in the eye. But neither you nor I have laboured under such difficulties, nor do we now, nor shall we in the future. *Ma foi*. . . . I am not sure of it at times; had I to speak for myself and not for the two of us, I should say I myself have struggled, am struggling, and shall yet have to struggle against moral beams in the eye and moral slings round my arm (but that does not mean that I have to go on so) till in the end I shall stand free, without the one or the other.

When? . . . Well, in the end, if I have to persevere till the end.

You will see that, if we continue this correspondence with each other, we shall both gain by it. It will gradually become more serious.

Notwithstanding the fact that I am giving my fantasy free rein, I am writing in dead earnest, and it is far from my thought to write for the sake of arguing. What I really wish to impress on you is

this: "I want to awaken Rappard," and I doubt that I'll fall asleep myself in the process. *À Dieu ne plaise* that such should be the case, and far from my mind be it!

I have told you earlier that I consider the artist whose picture I see as much as I consider the picture itself. If it happens that I do not know the man, then I am obliged to come to conclusions when I see his work (we cannot know every artist personally) and vice versa. As regards Mr. Rappard, I know some of his work, and secondly I know the man himself a little. His work tells me: "The next will be better," and he personally tells me the same.

*De bien à mieux.*

Do you think this is a very ruthless judgment?

Now, to jump from one thing to another: as to my *bête noire*, I have not had much time to go hunting that animal, but today I could not resist attacking it a little.

But about this, more later; only it seems as if "it" is on the lookout. When one is resigned to a thing, one gets used to it. But it is not yet my intention to leave it at that.

*Enfin*, at a future time I'll tell you something about this *bête noire* of mine. *Sacrée bête noire! Ça me fait du bon sang tout de même.*

In the meantime, believe me, with a handshake,

Yours,

VINCENT.

I am writing quite often now because I'll have a great deal of correspondence to attend to a little later.

*The Hague, December 3, 1881.*

DEAR RAPPARD,

I received your letter from Brussels. I don't like it at all, but as you said yourself, you wrote it at a moment when you were a little abnormal. Nothing, or hardly anything, holds together. I am glad you are back from Brussels; in my opinion you really do not belong there, and as to the technical "prestige" which you hoped to acquire there, I am afraid you would be disappointed with the outcome, as even that cannot be learned from people like Mallaert.

Unfortunately I am very busy and am in the midst of all sorts of work, because I have rented a small studio here and I'll move in on about the first of January, and I have a lot of things to put in order.

Later on, when I have quieted down, I'll write you quietly about all these and other things, but you must excuse me now. I have more serious things to do than to write letters. Naturally, my letters do not pretend to be right always, or to explain things precisely. Oh no, I often miss the mark. But I tell you this, Rappard—those academic chaps, about whom you are so concerned, are not worth a dime. And I mean Stallaert and Severdonck, and I mean it with all my heart. And I tell you that, if I were you, I should let them go. But I have already said this to you a couple of times—I won't say it any more. I don't want to hear or say another syllable about the Academy; it is not worth my while. And I send you my greeting herewith. What kind of people are those with whom you drank

"*Lambeck*"? Why don't you mention a couple of them by name? Are those men of any importance to you? I doubt it. Good day, old chap—I haven't time for any more—and neither do I feel like writing any longer. In the long run, when you are back in your studio and working regularly with models, you'll be much more satisfied.

*Enfin—bonjour,*

VINCENT.

If you feel like writing now, you can send the letters to Etten; they'll forward them. I am weighing the advantages of two or three studios, and before January I'll decide which one I'll take—but at the moment I have no permanent address; you'll get that later.

I left Etten because there were too many discussions with my father about things which don't seem worth while talking about: going to church, etc., and that got me too much into the mood of boredom and chilliness when I was working hard, which is wrong. So I settled down here and am glad that I am in different surroundings. I am, of course, a little worried financially, but that is better than always being bothered and in the midst of quarrels.

Etten, December 12, 1881.

DEAR RAPPARD,

As I have not received an answer to my last letter to you, I have been thinking: "Probably he did not like what I wrote, and perhaps there was something in it that displeased him or irritated him. *Qu'y faire?* Even if this is so, do you think it is nice of you? I am not always sure whether what I say to you is proper or improper. Whatever it may be, I do know that I have a real warm sympathy for you and, granted that I sometimes express myself harshly, I think you will see, by rereading my letter, that I am not the kind of person who is your enemy; I am sure you will admit this. If this is the case, then perhaps you'll also come to the conclusion, by quiet reflection, that my roughness, although bitter-tasting, sooner or later will prove of great benefit.

Rappard, stop and think why I speak thus to you. Surely not because I am trying to snare you, or to lure you to a well that I might drown you. Don't you think it is because I have reason to think that Rappard is risking himself on thin ice? I grant that there are people who can keep standing even on thin ice and can even execute *tours de force* on it. Even so, even if you can stand as firm as that (I do not deny it), even so, I would rather see you march on a footpath, or a concrete road.

Don't be angry with me . . . read further, to the very end . . . but if you are angry, then you had better tear up this letter unread  
But first count to ten . . . one . . . two . . . three . . . etc

That's very soothing. Something dreadful is following!! What I want to say is this:

"Rappard, I believe that when you are working at the Academy you'll try more than ever to become a true realist and that you'll stick to the realistic even there. Perhaps you won't be aware of this, *sans le savoir*. The Academy is a kind of mistress who will prevent a more serious and fruitful love from awakening in you. . . . I say to you: 'Leave her alone, and fall head over heels in love with the real lady-love Dame Nature, or call her Reality.'"

I fell in love like that myself, and that is the reason I am so happy, although she is trying to resist and does not want me yet and she often slaps my hands if I call her mine too soon. Consequently I cannot call her mine or say that I have won her. I can only say that I am wooing her, and am trying to find the key to her heart, and I do not mind her slapping my hands.

Besides, you must not think that there is only one Dame Nature or Reality. This is only a name we give to her sex; she has many sisters, with different Christian names. (So we need not be rivals.)

*As-tu compris, mon cher? C'est purement artistique, bien entendu, n'est-ce pas?*

Well, there are to my mind two kinds of mistresses. With one kind you can take as well as give love, but it must be understood from your side or, if you like, from both that it is only temporary, and that you must not give yourself entirely, without another bow to your string, or *sans arrière-pensée*.

*Ces maîtresses-là, elles énervent, elles flattent, elles gâtent, et puis . . . puis . . . elles vous brûlent.*

The second kind is of an entirely different character: *Collets montés, Pharisienness-Jésuites!!!* They are such *femmes de marbre—sphinx—vipères glacées*—who would like to tie men to them for ever without giving themselves *sans arrière-pensées* or without

keeping another bow to their string; they do not give themselves as you do. *Elles sucent le sang, ces maîtresses-là, elles glacent les hommes et les pétrifient.* But I told you, my friend, that I am only speaking in an artistic sense and I compare the first kind, those who burn, to the kind of art that becomes vulgar, and the other kind—*collets montés, celles qui gèlent et pétrifient*—to the Academic Reality . . . or . . . or—if you like a sugared pill—to the Non-Academic Reality! ! ! There is only a *little* sugar on the pill!

*As-tu compris?*

Now, then, thank heavens, there are, besides these two kinds of women, others—they are family ladies, Nature and Reality by name; but, my dear chap, it will cost a great deal of mental agony to win one of these. They demand nothing more nor less than entire submission of heart, soul, and mind, practically all the love in you, but then . . . then . . . they give themselves, too. These noble ladies, however, although gentle as doves, are as wise as serpents and clever at distinguishing the true from the false.

*Elles renouvellent, elles retrempent, elles donnent la vie, cette Dame Nature, cette Dame Réalité.*

My dear Rappard, there are people, and perhaps you and I belong among them, who realize that they have at some time or other had a mistress either of the one kind or the other, *soit le sachant, soit sans le savoir*, or perhaps we know both kinds.

*Tu as donc, selon moi, une maîtresse qui te glace, te pétrifie et te suce le sang.*

So, my friend, I tell you, you must cut loose from this *femme de marbre* (or is it only plaster?—*quelle horreur!*) or you'll freeze to death!

Meanwhile, if I seem to be a tempter, one who wishes to drag you down, it might be to the *puits de la vérité*.

*Enfin*—don't try to sell me an unacademic mistress (I mean, fig-

uratively speaking)—do you understand?!! She is a shrew, I think.  
*Mon cher, je suis d'avis qu'elle te trompera si tu te laisses prendre. Envoie-la à tous les diables. Faites-la décamper plus vite que ça. C'est purement artistique, cependant, n'est-ce pas?*

*Eh, quoi! Si en dehors et en route de ça c'était encore autre chose —tant mieux—je ne m'en dédis pas—quand-même je voudrais prendre mes paroles en sens non-figuré. As-tu compris, mon cher, et . . . et . . . dites-moi . . . m'écritas-tu maintenant plus vite que ça, hein? . . .*

*Crois-moi toujours avec une poignée de main,*

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

I recently made a drawing, *Lunch Hour*, of a labourer resting and drinking his coffee and eating a slice of bread while he sits on the ground, with his spade beside him, after returning from the field.



*The Hague, December 1881.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

Your letter, which I received last night, pleased me very much. I had been expecting it, and the delay was due, I thought, to your travelling from one place to another. What you say about Drenthe<sup>1</sup> interests me. I don't know it at all and have heard of it only from Mauve and Termeulen and have seen only what they brought back from their trip. I imagine it is something like North Brabant. *When I was young*, about twenty years ago, I can remember seeing the heatherfields and the little farmhouses, the looms and the spinning-wheels, just as they are portrayed in the drawings of Mauve and Termeulen.

Since that time Brabant has changed and is no longer the Brabant of twenty years ago; land has been reclaimed and different industries have sprung up. Speaking for myself, I look with a certain sadness at the red-tile-roofed new taverns and the beet-sugar factories, the railways and reclaimed land. Those new buildings, etc., are not half as picturesque.

It can't be helped; still I feel sure the intense poetry of the heatherfields will always stay with me. And in Drenthe things seem still to be what they were years ago in Brabant. Even so there is enough left there that is beautiful and poetic—perhaps you can remember the tiny meadow where we were together?

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<sup>1</sup> A small province in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands.

Your small sketches in the letter were very good indeed and in the little *Churchyard* especially there is so much character.

As to myself, since my brother was here, and saw my water-colours, I have started working and am painting as fast as I can.

To be truthful, I do not think that one would say that my oil-paintings look like first attempts. It really comes very easy and I am very ambitious.

Last night, while walking along the Ryswyksche Road, I noticed a pleasing scenic effect—flat green meadows with a black coal-path across it and a ditch alongside, a flaming red sunset, and an old peasant walking heavily, in the background a farmhouse.

I have made a small marine—*Patch of Dunes*—also a *Potato-Field* and some *Willow Trees*, all in oils.

I enjoy painting so much that it will be difficult for me not to do oils *exclusively*.

I think they are so much more masculine than water-colours and there is more poetry to them.

Most likely you know that we are having an exhibition by the Holland Drawing Society. There are some splendid drawings, really fine work. *A Woman at a Weaving-Loom* by Mauve, so beautiful that I cannot get it out of my mind; *An Old Mother* by Israels, just as fine; things by Neuhuys, Maris, Weissenbruch, Ter-meulen, and many others. I should mention a jolly portrait of Weissenbruch by Israels, it is so typical and real that I can't describe it to you.

I must not forget the lovely marine by Mesdag as well as two of his Swiss pictures, which are rather *bête*; notwithstanding their boldness there is not much feeling and finish to them, while his big marine is so superb. Willem Maris has a typical *Sow* with a legion of piglets. . . . Jacob Maris has a *City View*, which is as good as Vermeer of Delft.

Not long ago we had another exposition here of French art from private collections: Daubigny, Corot, Jules Dupré, Jules Breton, Courbet, Diaz, Jacque, Ed. Frère, Th. Rousseau; they gave me so much inspiration, and at the same time I felt a certain melancholy when I thought how these old veterans are gradually disappearing. Corot has gone; Th. Rousseau, Millet, Daubigny, they are resting quietly from their labours and have retired. Jules Breton, Jules Dupré, Jacque, and Ed. Frère are still in the field, but how long will they still be going about in their blouses? They are all elderly and stand more or less with one foot in the grave. We have their successors—but are they as worthy as the real Modern Masters? All the more reason that we must set to work fiercely and not slacken in our efforts.

I am very much pleased with my new studio and can find all my material right here in the neighbourhood. I am hoping that you will come very soon to see it for yourself; I am also anxious to see some of your work. If you are not able to come, write and tell me about what you are doing.

My brother too sends you his kind regards, I told him how busy you were with your work.

Things go with me as with you these days; there is not much time for correspondence, and I am writing this hurriedly.

Good luck to you, and may you succeed in every way. Believe me, with kind thoughts and a handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.



\*(1882)\*.

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138 Schenkweg, The Hague,  
Sunday evening, 1882.

AMICE RAPPARD,

I have just put my drawings into the package for Amsterdam, as agreed. There are seven in all. The bigger of the two *Little Courts* is now quite flat after I mounted it on Bristol-board, and it now has more rapidity of line. Then there is the *Flower Nursery*, which I changed the way you suggested, that is, I studied the side of the ditch and the water in front of it and it really shows to advantage now, and expresses spring, I think, and a certain gentle calmness.

And the one of the *Carpenter's Shop*—taken from the window of my studio—I brought a new blackness into it, by working on it with the pen, and now “the sun shines” because the lights are more expressive. Today I was at it quite early because I wanted to make another drawing and went among the dunes to draw a fish-drying barn seen from a height, like the *Carpenter's Shop*, and it is now nearly one o'clock in the morning, but thank the Lord everything is finished and I can look my dangerous landlord in the face. And so *ça ira encore*.

I was so glad to have seen you again, and what you told me about your work interested me very much, I assure you. I do so hope that we can arrange a few trips in this neighbourhood some time soon. I think you would find good material in these fish-drying barns. They really are marvellous—like Ruysdael (I mean it is something like his bleaching-fields of Overveen). But perhaps you know

The Hague and Scheveningen better than I do. But if you should not know the slums, de Geest, etc., which are the Whitechapel of The Hague, with all its back-alleys and little courts, I offer you my services if you wish to go there when you come here again.

I have found two more wood-engravings for you, one by Mrs. Edwards and one by Green; the latter is especially fine—it is of a man painting a signboard with a few onlookers of the time of Louis XVI. I also must have a duplicate of Rochussen somewhere for you.

It seems to me that you could have a much finer collection than mine if you would take a little trouble; perhaps yours is better already. I have never seen everything you have; I saw only the small Dürers, Holbeins, and the Du Mauriers, besides a few others. Should you find something interesting, please keep me posted.

Do you know the *Wayfarers* by Fred Walker? It is a large etching—an old blind man led by a boy along a frozen road on a winter evening, alongside is a ditch in which is frosted wood. It really is one of the most sublime creations in that genre—with quite a peculiarly modern sentiment to it. Perhaps less powerful than Dürer in *Ritter, Tod, und Teufel*, but maybe more intimate, and certainly as original and real.

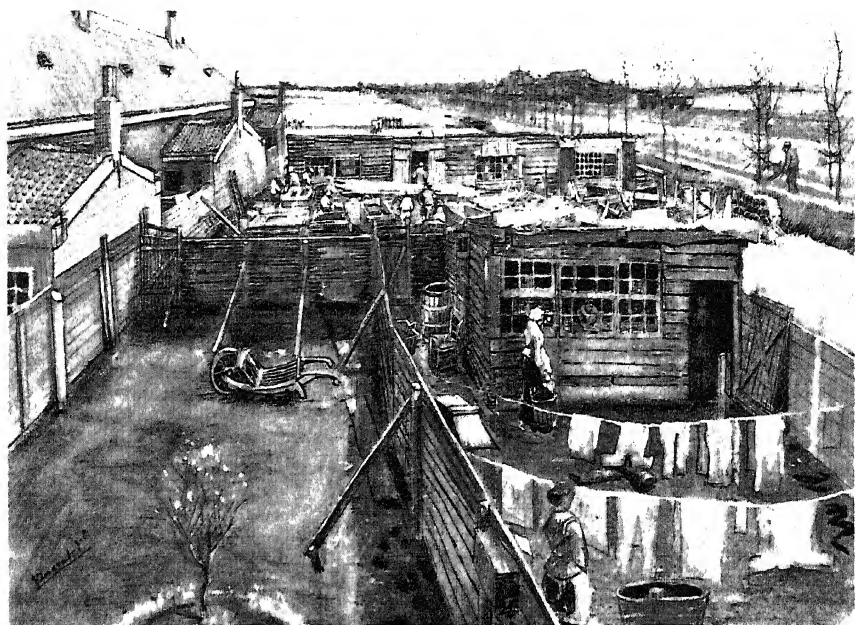
It is a pity that the artists here know so little of the English. Take Mauve, for example; he was so enthusiastic when he saw a landscape by Millais, *Chill October*; but they have no faith in English art and their judgment is too superficial, I think. Mauve says all the time: “That is literary art,” but he does not stop to think that the English writers like Dickens and Ellis and Currer Bell<sup>1</sup> and, amongst the French, Balzac are so plastic, if I may express it thus, that they are as potent as Herkomer or Fildes or Israels. And Dickens himself sometimes uses the expression “*I have sketched.*”

I myself hate scepticism and sentimentalism; I do not want to

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<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Brontë's pen name.





Carpenter's Workshop and a Laundry, 1882

Crayon touched with white, 11 x 18½ inches

KROELLER-MUELLER COLLECTION, WASSENAAR



insinuate that the artists here are sceptical or sentimental, but sometimes they make it appear so—although in regard to nature they are serious and faithful, so I really have no right to criticize them, especially as I catch myself leaning towards sentimentality more than is my intention.

So much that is beautiful and picturesque is disappearing these days! I lately read something by the son of Charles Dickens; he said: "If my father should return, he would find little of the London he described and called 'Old London'; it is passing and is cleared away." It is the same in our country—instead of the nice little courtyards, there appear rows of houses which are very unpicturesque, except when they are in the stage of construction. *Then* one has good things to look at: barns, scaffolding, and workers. There is a street here behind the Bazar Street and de Laan van Meerdervoort, where I have seen beautiful things: spaces which were being dug out or filled in, barns, lumber, cabins, fences, and many similar things.

What attracts me is the common people's kitchens and the third-class waiting-rooms. If I did not have to make my living by drawing views of the city, I would do nothing but figures of that type, but as I have not yet found customers for them and have the expense of the models, I cannot do it, but I must say that there are people who will gladly pose for me for nothing.

I am delighted with my present model, I mean that old woman; you saw her when you were here. Sometimes things don't go well and I get annoyed and swear; she learns better every day and understands me. For instance, when things go wrong, I fly into a temper, saying "Goddamn!" etc.—as strong language as that—and I get up, etc. But she does not take it as a personal insult as so many naturally would; she lets me calm down and we start all over again. And she is patience itself in seeking the right pose. When I need

to compare the height of a figure outside, as for instance on the beach with a fishing-boat as background, or when I have to catch the correct light, all I need to say is: "Be there at such a time," and she is surely there.

Of course people gossip because I am always in her company, but why should that bother me? I have never had such good assistance as this ugly, haggard old woman's. In my eyes she is beautiful, and she is just what I want. She has lived, and sorrow and suffering have marked her—now I can find a use for her.

When the earth is not ploughed, you cannot plant anything in it; she has been ploughed and is useful, so she is worth more than many others, I mean "unploughed" ones.

I hope you'll write me again soon, and if you agree, I would like to correspond regularly, if our work permits it, provided we warn each other should our "practical" chats become "unpractical," and we must not feel hurt at a warning such as was given in the case of Mr. Tersteeg and myself, as I told you.

I am going again tomorrow to the drying-barns on the dunes.

A while ago I read the book on Millet written by his friend Sensier; it is very interesting and I can recommend it if you haven't yet read it. Much that can be known only to intimate friends is revealed in it, and there surely is a great deal that is new in it, at least I think so, and I had already read much about M. before I read this book. Well, adieu, with a handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

1882.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Thanks for this morning's letter. It makes me so happy that you took my words in this gentle way, although I had not expected anything else. I hope you will not retract your opinion later on, when I give you a few more details to make the circumstances entirely clear and show you that I acted in good faith and in an honest manner.

I am concerned about a woman, who when I met her had one foot in her grave, mentally as well as physically, whose nerves were shot to pieces and whose mind was nearly unbalanced. Her only chance of recovery lay, according to the professors in Leiden, in a normal, regular home-life. And even under those conditions it will take years and years before she'll be quite normal again. As to the life she led, I am sure neither you nor I condemn her for that. . . . Frank Holl, in a drawing which is not reproduced, as far as I know, has stated her case. He says: "Her *Poverty* not her *Will* consents." Amice, this very moment I know four women (mine included) who have fallen and have been deceived in this city, and have illegitimate children, and their fate is so miserable that it is difficult for us to realize it, especially as they have hardly a chance to pull themselves out—theoretically there is one, but in reality none.

I must add something to what I have already told you. I do not think that my relation with this woman will be a passing one; it may

well be permanent. My words about earlier disappointments are something of which I cannot talk at present.

I felt, however, that I had to tell you all this. Suppose someone experiences a disappointment which hurts the love in him tremendously, and that he is *calm*—desperate and desolate. Such a condition is possible, as steel and iron can be *white* with heat. One can feel irrevocably and absolutely disappointed and carry the full knowledge of it like a deadly or incurable wound within one, and still go about with a straight face performing one's daily tasks.

Would it seem inexplicable to you if a person like that met someone in a similar condition and there arose a particular kind of sympathy without his seeking it? And this sympathy or love or tie, call it whatever you like, which arose accidentally, can become strong and lasting. When *L'Amour* is dead, is it not possible that *La Charité* is still alive and awake?

And now pardon me if I start about the woodcuts. Daily work is something that does not change, and if we delve deep down into it, it proves not half as difficult as gazing at unfathomable things.

I have found another beautiful Jacque, a *Woodchopper* (unfortunately it is covered with paint from a child's paintbox, but I have washed most of it away). It is a very lovely page. Also two Daumiers—*Rencontre de Ceux qui Ont Vu un Drame et de Ceux qui Ont Vu un Vaudeville* and *Amateurs de Tableaux*.

Two women, one with a child, sitting and chatting, by Oberländer; also two old men, who seem to be engaged in some serious business conversation, by the same artist. Both are typical sheets. The figures are rather smaller than his usual heads.

Besides, I have some beautiful Edmond Morins—especially the *Chestnut Trees in the Champs-Élysées*, a *Race*, and a *Wine-Harvest*.

By John Lewis Brown: *Hunters in the Woods*; by G. Doré: *Chute des Feuilles*; it is an old one done in a rough style but with a

great deal of sentiment; *Gipsies* by Valerio; Renouard's *Mendiants du Jour de l'An*.

Now you know all the new sheets I have. I am glad you took the Christmas Papers of *Harper's*, as this edition is perhaps too good to last. Don't you think *The Winter Girl* and *The Dutch Patrol* by Abbey very fine? Judging by those, you can understand how lovely his big pages, *Christmas in Old Virginia*, are. Swain did it in such an excellent way that it looks like a pen sketch; it does not look at all [as if] cut [on a block]; neither does the *Brighton Promenade* by Caldecott, which I believe you have yourself. I am acquainted with *Harper's Magazine* from a couple of numbers in my possession. I am also thinking to subscribe for this year's edition, but there might be a chance to buy it second-hand at the end of the year.

Do you know that I am in correspondence with them about the way they produce such pages as those in their Christmas editions? I have samples of the paper and some information as to how those powerful black-and-white effects are produced. This paper is rather curious; the colour base looks like a greyish mist, and it lends itself especially well to snow effects. There is also a paper with *hachures*.

I am still keeping for you a nice page of Dagnan's, *Jardins des Tuileries*, and one by Montbard, *Mendiants Arabes*, besides a number of smaller ones and the duplicates of the *Graphic* pages.

Before you fell ill, you told me that you had duplicates of *Two Ladies and a Boat* by Heilbuth, which I lack, although I have some of his—I thought I would remind you of it.

I am not sure that I told you about "Old Christmas" from Washington Irving's *Sketch Book*, illustrated by Caldecott, and *Bracebridge Hall* by the same. They are sixpenny editions from Macmillan & Co., London. There are about a hundred small drawings by Caldecott in each. They are so beautiful that they make you think they are by Menzel.

Will you tell me some time the subject of de Groux's *Winter in Brussels*?

Have I written to you about Lhermitte? He seems to be on top in black-and-white drawings. It is said that he is the Millet and Jules Breton of black-and-white. An article mentioned his *Women Praying on the Cliffs of Brittany*, also a *Banc des Pauvres* and a *Vieux Marché*, and others.

Notwithstanding some nasty, yes, very nasty, experiences since I took this woman and her two children into my home, the encounter has brought me a certain calm and serenity—I have worked very hard this winter. I had some professional models.

At the moment I am not doing much, as I felt that after a couple of months of continual strenuous work, without any let-up, so to speak, my vitality was becoming very low, something I could not overcome. I worked on heads especially. My eyesight seemed to show the effect of this strain, and I could hardly see anything. These last days I walked a good deal in the country, and did very little drawing, and now my eyes are normal again. I think I must have at least 150 drawings that you have not yet seen.

The change in my home has not caused me to work less; on the contrary I have worked furiously, but with a quiet fury, if you will accept this expression. I also started my literary studies again, which I had put aside for over a year.

I believe you would like the baby. Those who abandon a woman when she is pregnant do not know what they are doing. A little child like this one brings a *rayon d'en haut* into the house. And as to the woman herself, do you remember what Gavarni said: "*Il y a une créature insupportable, bête, méchante, c'est la jeune fille; il y a une créature sublime et dévouée, c'est cette jeune fille devenue mère*"? These words of course do not describe all young girls or women; only he meant to show that something which was vanity



before motherhood becomes sublime afterwards, when she has to care for her children.

I saw in the *Graphic* a little figure by Paterson to illustrate '93 by Victor Hugo, called *Dolorosa*. And it made an impression on me, since it looked like my woman when I found her.

In the same copy there was a scene of a man who looked hard and proud but, when he saw two children in danger, he suddenly melted, and he saved their lives. Although selfish by nature, he forgot his own danger at the sight of the children's.

Of course we never find ourselves in a precise way through a book, but we come across things of a general nature which we recognize vaguely in our own hearts.

I think there is a lot of truth in *The Haunted Man* by Dickens. Do you know it? Neither in '93 nor in *The Haunted Man* do I see myself; everything is quite different, the reverse rather, but when I read it I find that it awakens much within me.

Adieu, with a handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

*The Hague, 1882.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

I have just received your letter, and thank you so much for it. It really gives me great pleasure to have you enjoy the wood-engravings. Furthermore I respect your point of view with regard to what I have sent you now and then, and I hope to go on doing so, unless you object.

But I am in a sad predicament; as far as I am concerned it is all unsettled, but all the same I shall have to decide. It is this: I have to tell you what they cost me. As you know I have an exceptional liking for these engravings. I buy them most of the time very cheaply. Still, for a person in my position I have spent a good deal on them, although I have never regretted it. Whether I paid much or little for them has no real importance as regards the ones I have sent you, as they are always duplicates, and none which I myself lack—you saw that for yourself last summer when we sorted them out and put the extra copies aside.

So you see, I did not buy them especially for you—except a few for which I gave so little that I wish I could find more like them. But as you insist upon it, let me charge you a *daalder*<sup>1</sup> for the lot. You can send it to me in stamps some future time and then your conscience won't hurt you because of financial obligations towards me. So in this way I think we have decided this question.

Now I asked you some time ago to let me know whether you subscribed to the magazines—*Illustration* and the *Graphic*—I mean

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<sup>1</sup> Obsolete coin worth about one shilling or twenty-five cents.

for the current year. The reason is that I am negotiating with a man who has a number of magazines from a library for sale. I have decided to take them in any case, but I already have some of the current year and doubtless I'll have extra ones. If they are, for instance, from *Illustration* and if you have them already, then I want to give them to someone else who might also like and collect them. (I do not know of anyone at present.) But if you should not have them, then they are yours, of course. I had already arranged to take them before your letter arrived, and I hope to have them here within two weeks, perhaps even before that long, so if you care you can let me know how you stand about the magazines of 1882. Of course I do not know how many duplicates there will be among them, but surely there will be a few. *So be good enough to let me know.* If it is worth while, then I will charge you something for them and we can straighten things out at some future time. But give me the pleasure of assisting you with your collection, which interests me very much, and I'll be very pleased to see it become a really beautiful one. It is possible that I shall be able to send you important sheets later on.

I have already about 40 large and small Renouards. A little while ago I found his *La Bourse* and *Discours de M. Gambetta* and the sheets *Enfants Assistés* also. I am certain that you will be delighted with a couple of large Lançons.

I think that Caton Woodville is very clever, too; the more I see of them, the better I like his things.

Do you know a man by the name of Montbard—I think you must have some landscapes of his? Lately I have acquired some sketches by him from Ireland and Jersey, which have a great deal of sentiment.

I most sincerely hope that you'll get some satisfaction and pleasure out of the fact that one of your pictures hangs in Arti. I don't think I'll see the exposition.

I am very busy drawing an old man from the old-folks' home; he is walking (don't you think it is funny the way we call these old people orphans?). Street types are not easy to do.

With regard to my water-colours, I have started a fair number, but I am not yet very successful with them, although I get more pleasure out of doing them than formerly.

Look here, this is a scribble of an *Old Man from the Almshouse*. Adieu, I am writing hurriedly. But let me hear soon about the woodcuts, whether you have them or not.

With a handclasp,

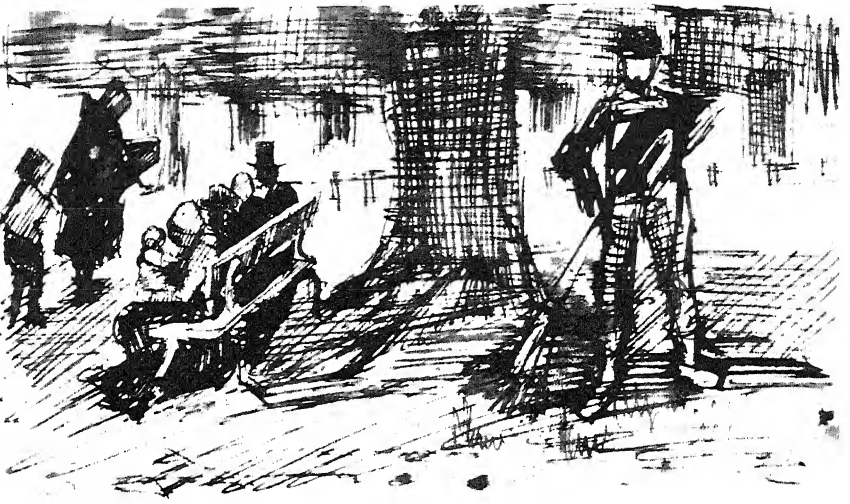
*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.



Nº 109





Lieber in groter haast een krabbel  
van een agniet waarom ik deende ben.





*City Hospital, Ward No. 6,  
June 24, 1882.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

This is to thank you for your last letter, and I should certainly have done it sooner had I not been out of sorts. For I did not receive your letter at the studio but in the hospital, where I have been for three weeks. So your letter was doubly welcome during those days, and what you said about my drawings, which were not to my dear uncle's liking, pleased me twice as much. I also heard from someone else later that they were not so poor, and that he really did not mean it so badly.

However the case may be, while I was making those drawings, as well as a few similar ones—the drying-barns on the dunes among them—I caught cold and got a fever, which, added to nerves and other things, affected my bladder so that I could not urinate. This caused me much distress, and when it became too painful, I came here. They inserted a catheter into the bladder, and so on, so now I am becoming myself again, feeling more normal; which makes me very happy. Still, I am not over it yet, and do not yet know when I can go home. I am hoping that I shall be better in about a week, but of course it takes time.

It really is quite nice here; I am lying in a ward with ten beds, but as I have to keep very quiet, I have not been able to draw anything—even now I am making only a very weak effort, and I am not yet able to get down to it and attack it properly. I am now allowed

an hour daily in the garden, and yesterday while there I started again to scribble. And at least I began to look at things, whereas in the beginning I felt too wretched to do even that much. When I leave here, I shall have to be careful for a while. *Enfin* . . .

What I especially want to praise is the treatment. If I ever get sick again, I shall not hesitate for a minute about going to the hospital. It is so much more practical in my opinion than being sick at home, especially in my circumstances.

As far as feeling goes, I am really quite recovered, or nearly that, but the hitch lies in the fact that, if I move about too much, I may have a sudden relapse, which happened last week, otherwise I would be further ahead now.

.. As soon as I have a couple of drawings again, for example, like those of the drying-houses, or the little courtyard, I should like to send them to you, hoping you can find someone who might buy them. But I shall not hurry with it and shall wait till there is an exceptionally good one in the lot, as I prefer sending it to you rather than to Amsterdam. All the same I hope Amsterdam will work out all right in time. And let us agree, should you not succeed in placing them for me, you must not feel embarrassed or hesitate to return them, and do not think that it will discourage me, because success cannot come all at once. It may be the fault of the drawing or it may be the fault of a possible buyer; let us both agree that we won't be frightened away directly if the attempt fails.

As soon as I have started, I'll write you again. Once more thanks for your letter, which I did not want to postpone answering any longer.

Believe me, in the meanwhile,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

*Summer of 1882.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

It pleases me to be able to send to you the enclosed woodcuts. You will notice that they are somewhat damaged on the folds, which is not caused by the sending, but, rather, because they have been so long in use in a public library. You can, however, paste them together yourself just as I have had to do quite often. Write, some time, and tell me if you have Percy McQuoid's *Figure of a Woman* with a light in her hand. She stands on the stairs of an armoury, where one sees a glint of a cuirass. I think I have already given it to you, along with a *Girl in White* leaning against a tree, but if you should not have it, I shall send it when I have a chance. McQuoid is one of the most distinguished of the English illustrators.

I think you will also like the Renouards. Perhaps, later on, I can add a few more, but a part of the lot of magazines (out of which I took these, as well as mine) the man had not brought, because they were too much damaged. When I have time I shall go through the mess, which is not a very pleasant job.

The *Grève des Charbonniers* I think is superb; I am sure it will also please you. I have taken pains to get things with miners in them. This and an English one of an accident are the best. Such subjects are not often treated; I wish I myself could make studies like these sooner or later. Write me, please, Rappard, in full earnestness, if you would like to come with me in case I should go for two months to the mine district in the Borinage.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This would be his second trip there, since he lived in the Borinage in 1879.

It is a rather difficult section of the country; such a trip is not a pleasure trip, but it is one of those things I should like to undertake as soon as I feel a little stronger. I want to make drawings, with lightning speed, of these people in action, for I know there will be so many beautiful things to make, which have not yet been painted by others. Because one has to contend with all kinds of trouble in such a district, I think it wise that we should go together. My circumstances, at present, really do not permit it, but it is a thought that is deeply rooted within me.

I work frequently, now, on the beach. Whether painting or drawing, the sea always inspires me.

I do not know what your experience has been with artists here. I have found that people abuse hatefully what they call the "illustrative," in a manner that proves to me clearly that they do not understand the question at all, and do not even know what is going on in that field. They are not to be convinced, or, rather, do not choose to take enough trouble to look at the things. If they have, the material has remained with them for a short time only, and then has gone entirely out of their heads again. Now, from my experience with you, I know that you think differently about it.

I have lately found some things by Lançon: a *Soup Distribution*, a *Rendezvous de Chiffonniers*, *Balayeurs de Neige*—I got up in the night to look at them again, so strong was the impression they had made on me.

And, while I myself grind away to make something like those things that always interest me—in the street, the waiting-rooms of the third class, on the beach, in a hospital—my respect increases for the great draughtsmen of the people: Renouard, Lançon, Doré, Morin, Gavarni, Du Maurier, Ch. Keene, Howard Pyle, Hopkins, Herkomer, Frank Holl, and many others. Perhaps you have felt the same thing.

*Enfin*—whatever it be—it always interests me tremendously that we are working along the same lines; we choose the same subjects; I am often sorry that we are so far away from each other, and can know relatively little of each other's work.

Well, my writing time is short, so receive a handclasp with kind thoughts, and believe me,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

Herewith in great haste a scribbled sketch for a water-colour I have been working on.

*The Hague, October 1882.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

I received your letter a minute ago and it is just what I wanted. Now I know about what you have, and as the occasion arises I can work towards finding things to add to your collection.

In the first place—*That Beautiful Wretch*—I have NOT got it, and it surely is lovely, and if possible I would love to have it. The holiday number, in which are also very beautiful illustrations of Caton Woodville, Knowles, etc., I'll send you today or tomorrow, in addition to the pages by Lecolle, Small, Robinson, Robertson, Renouf, Overend, Morris, Koch, Meyerheim, Knaus, Frank Holl, Rochussen, Edelfelt, Emslie, Vierge, Kaufmann, Heywood Hardy.

You have just three Frank Holls that I lack, but how beautiful is the one of *The Two People in the Wagon*, and also the others, and then *Bereaved*—I know them very well. The one I sent you I believe completes the set of *Summoned for Active Service*, and *Home Again*. I have not got those by Hopkins that you have, but I have others (*Fancy Ball* and *Charity*).

What interests me very much is Bückmann's *Vor dem Asylhause*. Is this one out of a magazine of this year? Let me know in which it is. Then I'll order it. I know his work and I think it is splendid. It seems to me that he must have interpreted this subject beautifully. Herkomer's *Schwierigkeiten* I do not know either, nor Overend's *Gottesdienst—Nordpol*, nor Régamey Boulanger, on your last list. If the *Boat Race*, of which you do not know the artist, is one in

which is a part of a boat in the foreground with a lady in black in it, a lady in white, and a dog, then it is by no other than *Paul Renouard*.

I also have for you a magnificent thing by Dagnan, *Un Charmeur au Jardin des Tuileries*, and one by Montbard, *Mendiants Arabes*. These two have been a little torn, but I have repaired and mounted them. They are both very large and I won't send them now, as the package would be so big if I sent them flat, and I cannot fold them now that they are mounted. When you, at some time in the future, come here, you can take them with you as you did last summer. As they are French ones, most likely you already have them, and in that case I'll keep them. They are both especially beautiful. Let me know if you haven't got them; then I'll keep them out for you. I have been thinking again about your scruples of accepting the ones I send, and although I respect your feelings, still I believe you must not look upon it as a kindness, but as something very natural, for this reason: I hope you do not mind that I look on you as a friend, and I also hope that you think of me likewise, and I think you'll agree with me in my opinion that friendship is and must be *action* and certainly not a *feeling* only.

Therefore, it is very natural that I give you those of which I have duplicates, and which you do not yet have yourself. You from your side, for instance, when you were in Brussels, were very kind to me, and I profited by using your studio when I had not one of my own, and so on.

You write that you have seven months by Montbard. If I knew which, I might be able to complete them. I see also that I still have two lovely Stannards, which I enclose, and one of Dollman.

The monogram, "FD," I should have to look at to decide whether or not I can decipher it, but by the manner in which it is done, I wouldn't be surprised if it was F. DADD. Then, the monogram under

the *Arrival of the Coach* I cannot decipher. I have, however, found a sketch from Scotland, on which it also appears—*Salmon Fishermen*.

CATON WOODVILLE is famously clever and grows more and more so. I have, besides those which you have, *Nightly Visit*, and larger things from Ireland by him, which, with others by O'Kelly and Gregory and Dadd, form a series.

Well, today I went to the place where the street-cleaners dump the garbage and dirt. Good Lord, how beautiful that was—for Bückmann, for example. Tomorrow I'll get some interesting examples from those dung-heaps, for approval, or for use in posing, whatever you want to call it. Among other things, broken street-lanterns; they are rusty and warped. The man is going to bring them to me. It was something like a fairy-story by Andersen—this collection of discarded poles, baskets, kettles, soldiers' food containers, oil cans, wire, street-lamps, chimney pipes. . . . I'll dream about it tonight, but especially I'll work with these things this winter. I can recommend myself, when you come to The Hague again, as a guide to that place, and some other places, which, although as hideous as possible, are for an artist a paradise.

And now there is a drawing awaiting me, which I have put off for some while, and it is now necessary that I start at it. So you'll again receive, one of these days, some pages, and if it happens that you have duplicates, you know I'd love to have them.

Adieu. Good luck with your work. Don't you think the weather is wonderful these days, real "Chill October"? How beautiful the mud is, and the withered grass!

With a handclasp and thoughts,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

You would find my studio quite changed since last summer. It



is much roomier, and more practical. I hope that my work will not suffer from it.

Three guilders fifty<sup>1</sup> for a volume of *London News*, if it is an interesting old one, is not exorbitant, but it all depends on the contents, of course.

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<sup>1</sup>The guilder or gulden or florin was worth approximately \$.40 or 1/8.

*The Hague, October 1882.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

I received your letter and I wish to thank you very much for it. I am so eager to see your work! I see that the Arti people are up to their old tricks again. Those gentlemen never change and always will remain what they are. I congratulate you on their refusal. I cannot relate a similar experience for the simple reason that I have never even considered exhibiting; it leaves me indifferent. I should sometimes like to have a friend come to my studio to look at my work, but that happens very seldom. I never have had a wish (and I hope I never shall) to let the public in on it. I am not indifferent about appreciation of my work, but it must be done privately, and to me the least desirable thing of all is so-called popularity.

I have been looking over my studies since you were here and I found about a hundred figures of men and women and children, which does not include what I found in my sketch-book. Although the number does not mean much, the reason I mention it is to show that I am trying to work energetically. All the same I am looked down upon by those who work far less than I, and they consider me a nobody; that leaves me pretty indifferent. No one takes any notice of me here. So you see, although I have not exactly the same experience as you, it is like six of one and half a dozen of the other.

On the other hand, whoever wants to do human figures must have what I noticed on the cover of a Christmas number of *Punch*: "GOOD WILL TO ALL," and that to a high degree. We must sympathize with everyone and continue to do so, otherwise our work

De teekenaars van de Graphie voor de Graphie)  
indt ik het als uitstekends. Mustendeels loopt  
de rest uit op 3e stonken een glas de - hetin  
de zack zoo als 3e was.

Als ik geven en gezegt heb dat ik en nuon verkingen  
kan nu wach eens te zien zels verking is omgekeerd 3e  
dikwijls en nuon 37 / myne ook weer eens zucht.

Just omdat ik geloof ik aan te als hebben zou en  
gy ook het geheel zoudt jeen dit of zondertlyke tekeningen  
Cangzamentaris beginnen te voemen en wa en eens en er preten  
konden e vaders knippen of er niet als uit te hoelen zou gym.

Ik heb met zonder moeite eendelyk ontdekt hoe  
de mynwerkers vrouwen in de Dourouge hun zuchten  
dragen. Se kunnend te d en der 4d daon als vrom  
gemaakt heb - Maar het was myn te eeste niet -

Ik heb nu weder 12 studies voor dat je/de



Die de opening van den zack is dyt gebonden  
en hangt nuon onder de punten van  
den bodem worden in elhoen gestoken  
en zoo ontstaat de alleraardigste  
soort van monnikskaps. Oekwijls

liet ik een vromer met een zack poseren en nuon kwam  
het god uit. Ik heb het van een man die steenhaken laarde op  
Therren van de Rynpore geleerd.

Ik vond deze wach de Rynch. van 1855 en die van 1862

In eerstgenoemde staat een beeld - een van de oude 3 vromen dat  
ontschryfelyk groot van karakter. De laannalye keize van de land  
had geloof ik in syn trouwre zynopelende op den krennoverke, loen naar  
den young gezegt dat Rusland twee generaties had waarop 1 vertoonen  
kon n.l. de wintermaanden January. February. In de maand  
February van dat zelfde jaar geschied. het oekten. dat J. M. de Keizer



will be cold and weak. I consider it so necessary for us to watch ourselves and to take care not to become disillusioned; and therefore it is better not to get mixed up with what I call artists' intrigues. Against such things I want on the contrary always to be on the defensive. I think of the old proverb, "Men do not gather figs from thistles," when I see the satisfaction people get from going round with artists. I believe it is Thomas à Kempis who says somewhere: "I never mingled with men without feeling that I was a lesser man." The same with me; the more I associate with painters, the weaker I feel. Only when one feels that work undertaken by oneself is too much for one person, one must co-operate and combine forces seriously (e.g., Erckmann-Chatrion in their work, and the draughtsmen of the *Graphic* do it; that is excellent). In most other cases the matter ends in drinking a glass of wine together and leaving things as they were.

I have already told you that I am anxious to see what you are doing, and, on the other hand, it will mean very much to me if you will look at my work. It will help me, I know. You will be able to see how the single drawings are gradually forming a whole. I want to discuss this with you; perhaps I can do something with them.

At last I have discovered how the women in the Borinage carry their sacks. I made twelve studies of the same thing. You remember I did something—but could not get it right.

You see by the drawing<sup>1</sup> that the opening of the sack is tied and hangs *down*. The points at the bottom are turned inside, which makes such a comical-looking monk's-cap out of it. If you look at the numbers, 1 and 2, you will see how the women carry it with both their hands. Several times I had a woman pose for me, but it never turned out right. At last a man who was loading coal at the Rynspoor station showed me.

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<sup>1</sup> See facsimile page of letter facing page 58.

I came across the 1855 and 1862 *Punch*. In the former is a page by Swain, Sr., indescribably fine, and such character in it! The Tsar of Russia of that time, in a speech from the throne, referring to the Crimean War, had said that Russia had two generals they could depend on, the winter months January and February. During February of that year the Emperor caught cold; he became ill and died. Well, you see in *Punch* the old Tsar on his death-bed (probably drawn by Tenniel) and *General "Février" Turned Traitor* stands near the death-bed—in general's uniform, a clothed skeleton. The ghost, as well as the bed, is covered with snow and icicles. It really is marvellous; if such a thing is possible, it has even more sentiment than Holbein's *Todtentanz*.

C. R. (Robinson), of whom I sent you a most beautiful page, is rather variable, in my opinion. His things are sometimes lacking in appeal, although his figures are so well drawn. Still, I have a sheet which is nearly as fine as Caldecott's *Afternoon in the Kingsroad*. It is a long row of figures looking over a wall at a broken-down bridge.

Have you the Dagnan and Montbard, about which I wrote, *Charmeux au Jardin des Tuileries* and *Mendiants Arabes*? You know they are at your disposal.

I found another page by Emslie, *The Rising of the Waters*; it is a peasant woman with two little children in a flooded field with pollard willows.

I assure you that whenever I feel depressed I turn to my collection of engravings, and it stimulates me and I can get back to work with renewed courage. I notice in all those chaps a certain will-power, and they seem to have had such a healthy, jolly spirit, which cheers me up. And even when they draw a dung-heap, there is something uplifting and grand in their work; it is dignified.

You remember, in the book about Gavarni, what is said with

reference to his drawings, "*Il en sabra jusqu'à 6 par jour*"? And then think of the men who made the illustrations we saw lying about in that café; you'll admit they had an enormous amount of ardour and fire and they turned out a great quantity of work. To have something of this ardour and fire in ourselves and to keep it going is in my opinion better than the conceit of some artists who won't even look at that work. I often think of what your friend, or rather your critical visitor, said—I find it difficult to express it properly—wasn't it: "The unpermitted line"? It is very true and rather curious, but convey to him, when the occasion arises, my esteem for his wisdom and competence, and although I have not the honour or pleasure of knowing him personally, men like him are no strangers to me. Ask this friend of yours if he objects to the *Bénédicté* by de Groux and the *Last Supper* by L. da Vinci. In those compositions the heads are also done in *straight* lines.

Do you know the *Midsummer Night's Dream* by Harry Furniss? It shows some folk—an old man, a street-sweeper, a drunkard—spending the night *on a bench* in the park. It is as fine as the finest Daumier.

How do you like the *Fairy Tales* by Andersen? I think he too is a maker of illustrations. [*End missing.*]

*The Hague, October 1882.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

Just as I was *en route* to the printing office I met the postman, who gave me your letter. Receive my hearty thanks for your proposition, about which I will write in a while.

First, I want to tell you that I am working on my fourth stone, and I am sending you copies of the three which you have not got. Two of them I will retouch: the *Digger* and the *Coffee-Drinker*. The latter looked much better as a drawing. In the lithograph I used indelible ink, which did not come out well, and much of the "go" that was in the drawing has gone out of it. There was also more life to the black because the *hachure* expressed much more direction and shape in the pleats. Well, the same is the case with the *Digger*, but in this sheet there has generally come a certain power and roughness which is in accordance with the character of the man, although I would have liked a fresher tone.

Now I am trying to find something in which I can combine the new procedure (the transference of a drawing on paper) with the old way (to work directly on the stone itself). Do you remember the drawing, *Worn Out*? I made a new one a few days ago. Three times I tried it, with two models, and I am still working on it. For the present I have one which will be the subject of the fifth stone and which shows an old labourer who is sitting pondering, with his elbows on his knees, and his head (this time a bald head) in his hands. I say all this about this lithograph to show you how keen I



am about it, and so your proposition about the money that was lost is most welcome. The letter has not yet been found, and contained a 50-franc note. For the present, let us wait, as they are making inquiries. I told the man in the printing office about it, and he feels very kindly towards me, so he is not pressing me about the cost of the stones at present. Besides, the stones are with him, so he is not taking any risk, or very little.

And as to your proposition—in case of need I'll gladly accept it. It is like a prop, and now I dare go a few steps ahead, but perhaps it will not be necessary, and my letter may be found. It is certainly a stimulation to do double my best, and, just to prove to you that it (the *Digger*) is a lot of work, I drew him in twelve different positions, and I am looking for better ones still. He is a marvellous model; a real, veteran digger.

Last Sunday I had van der Weele, an artist and also instructor in drawing at the high school here, and he saw the different drawings of *Old Men in the Almshouse*, and advised me to make a large drawing out of it, but I think it is too early. I have to have more studies; the *Coffee-Drinker* is one of them.

Enclosed is another woodcut after Frank Holl.

This brings me to what you say about the package of magazines you bought. I congratulate you on obtaining them. '70-'76 is just the nice period; especially for the English. At that time *Black and White* was flourishing; in fact, was at its height. I should think there ought to be nice ones among them.

I will tell you why I want to put all I can into the lithographs. If I can get together a number of good stones (there is sure to be a failure once in a while), I will be able to apply for work, for example in England. It goes without saying that one has more chance to succeed if one can show some work. For example, if one can send some proofs of lithograph work, it is better than when one

struggles to present his qualifications with words alone. To send *drawings* is a bad business, as they might easily get lost. This new process enables me to work for a lithograph firm somewhere out of town, without having to send stones far away. Today I just bought a new kind of chalk (Kopal chalk) for it. My address now is Schenkweg, 136. I would like to have your opinion about these proofs that I am sending. If it is possible for me to correct any mistakes, I'll gladly do so. But I have to be careful when it is once put on, for then the work is out of my hands. I believe the new *Worn Out* will please you very much. I hope to attack it on the stone tomorrow.

Well, my paper is full. Don't think because I am writing only about business that I don't care about your illness. On the contrary, I am thinking a great deal more about it. Last summer I too caught cold and had a rather high fever. Well—I only hope it isn't the same. . . . *Quoi qu'il en soit*, I wish you most sincerely a speedy recovery. Believe me, with a handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.



Old Man Drinking Coffee, 1882

Black lead,  $9\frac{7}{8}$  x  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches

KROELLER-MUELLER COLLECTION, WASSENAAR





Peasant Digging, 1882  
· Lithograph, 20 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 14 $\frac{5}{8}$  inches  
COLLECTION OF V. W. VAN GOGH



October 1882.

AMICE RAPPARD,

My hearty thanks for the money order and no less for your letter.

With regard to the disappointment about the money I was awaiting and which I mentioned to you, the matter has been cleared up by the delivery I had hoped for. A letter containing money (which was in payment for lithographs) was lost, and there is little hope that it will be recovered although they are making inquiries. I would rather have it this way than that my drawings received no sympathy, which was the case with the ones I sent last summer. And it is rather awful that I can't get ahead now, which would not have been the case had the money not been lost, but it will be straightened out later on and I am trying to continue working.

I have little time for writing, but all the same I want to tell you that your remarks with regard to my bad drawing in the lithograph in question are correct and I notice it now myself. I should like to write more extensively concerning what you said: "We must not send anything out into the world before it can satisfy the strict requirements of technique."

The art dealers say the same thing, and I do *not* believe what they say. *Think it over a little*, which would save me writing about it. Ask yourself if it is not permissible to send a drawing like this one, which has been made from the model, without retouching it, into the world (although I admit there is bad drawing in it). In just the same way it is permissible for me to go out into the street

in my working clothes, if I want to, without being obliged to go to the looking-glass to see whether something in my attire is missing. Suppose you admit that the analogy is good, and that you would do neither the one thing nor the other, the question remains whether, during a campaign, it isn't often more advisable to march quickly than to stop and see if your attire is correct? Also, I cannot agree with what you say with regard to the manner with which the public looks at things, stumbling over false drawings before it grasps the character. I believe there is a rather small part of the public that looks in the fashion that you describe, but the big crowd in general does not look in that way. To those Herkomer says: "*For you, the public, it is really done.*"

*Enfin*—if I can find time and words, I will try some other time to make clear to you what I mean, as I am now writing about questions on which I do not entirely agree with you (to this do not belong the remarks about the bad drawing, as I agree perfectly with you on that), so I come to the question of your "big decorations" and "menu" and want to say only this: My dear fellow, make something else. It is dangerous sailing. You know where you start from, but you do not know whether you can stop whenever you like. If you once get the name for being able to make something for "festive occasions," there can't come along a "festive occasion" without your being in on it. Look up old Mr. Smits, who wrote a very witty and practical article about it. He'll say it clearer than I can. It is a time of campaigning, or rather a time in which we must make a campaign.

I am not speaking of the drawing of the nude itself, but about the large decoration.

Boughton's *The Heir* I know as a picture; I saw it in the Royal Academy and at Goupil's. I thought it so lovely at the time that I made a little drawing of it for an acquaintance in Holland, to give



him an idea of it. I cannot get the *Mine-Workers* by Renouard. I looked for it everywhere in the last number of *L'Illustration*. Either they did not have it or those were numbers without it.

I want to ask you—on condition that I can square it up with you, but not otherwise—to take the trouble to look up the numbers in which those pictures appear, and to order them for me too, if you intend to order them for yourself. Should they not be able to do it in Utrecht, then I can order them here for you and for myself—if *I can have the numbers and dates in which they appear*. But in ordering single numbers one must always hurry, as it often happens that the orders are not executed or sometimes the number is sold out. For that reason it might be more practical to order them in Utrecht.

I have likewise ordered the *Enfants Assistés* by Renouard some time ago.

Yes, you must not mind my saying again in stronger language that the more menus and festive-occasion decorations you make, even if they are funny and good, the less your conscience as an artist will resist; while the more you keep working on serious things, such as your *Tile-Painters*—your *Little Knitter*, *Blind Institute*, etc., even if you are not directly successful, the more you'll get to see that serious work has its own *raison d'être*.

The Society Kunstliefde in Utrecht has more need for your work than for your decorations, even if the latter turn out very well.

Now I think that I still have a daalder of yours to buy woodcuts or something like that with, some time, and on that condition I won't return the surplus of your money order. It will be a great disappointment if the letter is not recovered, so the money order was doubly welcome. Accept once more my kind thanks for the quick remittance, and be assured that if I say something about the

decorations or this or that, and when I do not always agree with you and speak so frankly, it is just because I appreciate your striving and working and think it is of importance.

Awful as it may sound, it is my opinion that you can be of the greatest assistance (e.g., in the Society Kunstliefde) only if you refuse all little honour-jobs and decline to occupy yourself with being of "service" at festive occasions. I see no value in them whatever, either for the artists or for the public, and I do not consider them a proof of those "palmy days" which the society is celebrating.

Adieu, believe me, with a handshake and good thoughts,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

November 1, 1882.

AMICE RAPPARD,

The article by Herkomer interests me very much. Since receiving it I have been full of it, and I hope I can make use of what he says.

Will his discussion be understood? That's something I doubt. I'm afraid that, generally, he'll be misunderstood. And many will draw conclusions from his words that he did not intend. I agree entirely with what he says. He hits the mark. But I repeat seriously, one has to know something about the matter—more than most do—if one is not to arrive at wrong conclusions.

Many might draw the inference that Herkomer rejects the Americans and the school of Small, and to my mind that is not the case. He is speaking of decadence, and not without cause. He demonstrates as a principal fault the fact that in many wood-engravings it is the engraver and not the artist who drew the picture and deserves the credit for it. That is, he shows that the draughtsman is becoming weaker, and that fact he thinks is intolerable and fatal. I think this is perfectly true. For example, compare the page of Ridley's *The Miner* (which you wrote you had found lately) with the great types of beauty that the *Graphic* later produced; or take another page by Ridley, *The Children's Ward of a Hospital*, which I have, soberly and strongly engraved by Swain, and one resents the things I hear people say (who are supposed to be first-rate connoisseurs): "Well, yes, but that's the old school," and then we come

to what H. H. says. The old way of engraving, the elaborate, honest, unexaggerated drawing, is by far the best, Herkomer says. "Be careful, don't let that be lost, if you miss Art, then Art will get meningitis, or consumption of the spine." But I don't believe he accuses, for example, Small himself, and Chr. Green, and some others. I know reproductions of drawings by Herkomer, for example *Bavarian Sketches*, which have been done in the same manner. But Herkomer would not condemn *The Distribution of Peat Tickets in Ireland* by Caton Woodville, or the *Christmas in Olden Times* by Howard Pyle, although Caton Woodville and H. Pyle have both worked sometimes for the new way of illustrating and have passed beyond the borderline of it. I think it is a shame that Caton W. has done the big military things, never mind how clever they are; I prefer seeing his things like *The Peat Market*.

Besides, the speech directed against Harper's and the Americans makes me think of Charles Dickens. He spoke to them in the same way. Look at *Chuzzlewit*, etc.; and later, when he saw that they had come to the wrong conclusions, he put a foreword in the later edition of *Chuzzlewit* refuting the idea that America couldn't produce anything good, and he tells his other impressions of America in it. If you have it, look up Forster's *Life of Ch. D.*, and you'll see what I mean more clearly than I can express it. Thus in regard to the Americans and other present-day wood-engravers, don't let us accuse them too quickly, and let us think of the old proverb, "Don't pull out the good wheat with the weeds." His accusation of the publishers of the *Graphic* in general is not unreasonable. "Pleasing," "saleable," are horrible words to me. And I never met a dealer who wasn't saturated with them. They are a pest.

There are no greater enemies of art, though the managers of great art businesses have the reputation of making themselves useful as protectors of the artists.

They don't go about it correctly. The art business is such that the public, in coming to the dealer, is not brought into contact with the artist himself, and the latter has to run to the dealer to save his neck. But there isn't an artist who has not an unuttered grudge in his heart against them. They foster the worst and most barbarous tendencies and bad taste in the public.

. With reference to what you and I should get from the discourse of H. H., it is this: "Draw boldly, be serious, be honest." Listen, your last letter, as well as the impression that the energetic words of H. H. have made on you as well as on me, make me more than ever anxious that we should see more of each other's work.

It struck me at the last beautiful exhibition of Pictura that, although Israels, Mauve, Maris, Neuhuys, Weissenbruch, and many others remained themselves, yet in their followers one sees *decadence*, and one does not observe progress, especially if one looks at them not as isolated cases but in comparison with what appeared in exhibitions at the time when the *sommités* of the present day were the "rising men."

Then we see that those of the present day are not what the rising men of the former generation were. At present—more effect, less quality.

I have written you about this more than once before, and also that I see a difference of personality in the "rising men" of the present time. You know from experience that you and I are considered *mauvais coucheurs* and nonentities; we are looked on as bores in our work and in our personalities. And believe me, anyone who could have seen the so-called *sommités* of the present time ten years ago as artists as well as men is sorry that those days of ten years ago are gone.

I want to repeat on this occasion that I congratulate you on having been refused by Arti. If you were successful at a time like this,

when things are as they are, I should have much less respect and sympathy for you. I can see clearly and surely that we both shall produce very much better work than we do now, and that our present work is not bad. We ourselves must remain strong, and we must put breadth into our work, and there is no reason for us to be discouraged or upset when people who think they have found a better trend than ours speak slightly of our work. It is only because we are trying to show what we see in our daily home-life, in the street, in a hospital. If you knew, for example, what de Groux suffered from critics and ill-natured people, you would be surprised. We must not have any illusions about ourselves but, on the contrary, be prepared to be misunderstood, despised, and looked down on. Yet even so, and even if things get much worse than now, we'll keep up our courage and enthusiasm. It will be better for us, I think, if we concentrate on our work and give our attention to that, and to the men who preceded us, say those of twenty or thirty years ago. Then we shall not have to fear that people will say: "We must count Rappard and Vincent among the decadents." That is strong language, but I mean every bit of it, and as far as I myself am concerned, I will go my own way without paying any attention to the school of today.

Adieu,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

Do you remember the establishments *de bouillon* at Brussels; they opened one near the Hôtel de Ville at Roger. And I used to see them open up in the morning and serve free soup to the poor. This came back to me recently and I am now making a drawing of it. I have had models from de Geest. I think that street very much resembles the rue Haute or the rue Blaes in the Walloon quarter

of Brussels. And naturally I am looking everywhere for the proper types and even more to get the right atmosphere. Whether the free soup place is in London, Brussels, or The Hague doesn't matter; the character is always that which Bückmann expressed in *Vor dem Asylhause*.

The figure I jotted down in my former letter is one of the models for my drawing of this scene.

What is Wyllie's *Funeral of the Late Napoleon*?

*The Hague, 1882.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

Your very welcome letter just received, and as I am anxious for a chat with you, I am answering at once.

You write me: "Have you many German things?" As it happens I wrote to my brother about Vautier and other Germans the very same things that you have written. I referred to some figure-studies that I have done. At a recent exhibition of water-colours were a good many Italians. It was clever work, very clever indeed. Still, did it make an impression on me? No. And I remarked to my brother how jolly a time it was for the artists when those of the Club in Alsace started—the group of Vautier, Knaus, Jundt, George Saal, Muyden, Brion, not to forget Th. Schüler. They used to make drawings especially and were practically supported by fellow-artists, I mean by authors like Erckmann, Chatrian, and Auerbach.

Yes, the Italians are certainly clever, but where is their sentiment, their human feeling? I would rather look at a dreary scribble of Lançon—at a couple of rag-pickers eating their soup while it rains or snows outside—than at the brilliant peacocks' feathers of the Italians, which seem to multiply daily while the more sober artists are just as rare as they always were.

I mean it, Rappard, I would rather be a waiter in an hotel than paint water-colours like some of those Italians. Of course I do not say this of all of them, but I am sure you know what I mean; I refer to their school, and fail to see where they are going. I do not



include, e.g., Fortuny, who is Goya-esque, or Morelli, or even Tapero at times; they are really marvellous, like Heilbuth and Dürer. When I saw them for the first time, about ten years ago, when I was working at Goupil's, I admired them immensely and considered them even better than the German and English artists with their more elaborate pictures, or Rochussen and Mauve. Since then I have changed my mind, and they remind me of birds who can sing a tune of only one note; my sympathy is now greater for the lark and nightingale, whose songs have many tones and are less noisy and more passionate.

Well, I told you that I have not many things by the Germans, as those of Brion's time are difficult to get.

I once made a collection of these artists, but I gave it away to a friend of mine in England when I left Goupil's. I am damned sorry about it now.

If you want to have something very worth while, you must order *L'Album des Vosges* of the publishers of *L'Illustration*, *dessiné de Th. Schüller, Brion, Valentin, Jundt, etc.* I believe the price is 5 francs. I am afraid it is sold out, but it is worth making inquiries. It may be that the price increased with the demand. I know that they certainly will not send it on approval, so I have not asked for it.

I cannot give you much information about English draughtsmen as I do not know enough about them myself. All I do know is what I learned of them during the three years I lived in England, and at that time I saw rather a lot of things by them. One cannot possibly appreciate them unless one has been there for a while. They express themselves differently, and one has to get used to their interpretation; all the same it is worth the study and time. Those English are great artists; Mauve, Israels, and Rochussen come nearest to them. Of course, a picture by Thomas Faed differs in aspect from one by

Israels; and a drawing by Pinwell, Morris, or Small looks different from one by Mauve; a Gilbert or Du Maurier differs from a Rochussen.

Speaking of R., I saw a marvellous drawing of his, a French general asking information from a Dutch burgomaster, surrounded by his aldermen, in an old Dutch town hall. It seemed to me as beautiful as the scene at the house of Dr. Wagner in *Madame Thérèse* by Erckmann-Chatrian. I remember that you did not care very much for Rochussen, some time ago, but I am almost certain that you'll appreciate him very much when you see his more important drawings. The English draughtsmen are for me what Dickens is in literature. They express the same feeling; it is noble and healthy, and you always return to it.

I wish you would have time to look over my whole collection at your leisure. *When you look at a great number, you get a better viewpoint; the thing speaks for itself; you will see what a perfect school these men form.* It is the same with Dickens, or Balzac, or Zola; we read all of their books, in order to understand each separately.

To give you an example, I have about fifty sheets from Ireland; if you should see them separately, you might easily overlook them, but looking at them together, they fascinate you.

I do not know the portrait of Shakespeare by Menzel, but it will be rather curious to see how the one lion understands the other. I think Menzel's and Shakespeare's work have a similarity; both are *so alive*.

Do you know that I have a small edition of *Frederick the Great* by Menzel? Please bring Shakespeare's picture with you, next time you come to The Hague.

The engravings you mention are not among the ones I have, except the Régamey. Neither have I Heilbuth, Marchetti, Jacquet.

I haven't any by Whistler, but I have seen some of his lovely landscapes as well as figures; they were etchings.

The marine pictures by Wylin, which you mention, struck me too, and I know the *Widow's Field* by Houghton, it is really very fine.

Yes, it is true that I am wrapped up in these things, and I am shaping my whole life to draw these things, of which Dickens writes and for which the artists I mentioned also lived. Millet says: "*Dans l'art il faut mettre sa peau.*" I entered the struggle some time ago, and the gossip about what is called "the illustrative" in art cannot push me off the track. I do not associate any more with the artists here; how it happened or why is a matter that I cannot very well explain. You see, I am supposed to be a very peculiar and bad man. It sometimes makes me very lonely, but on the other hand, I can concentrate more on the things that never change, I mean on that which is eternal and beautiful in Nature. I think sometimes of the old story of Robinson Crusoe. He created an active life for himself because he was so lonely; he did not lose courage, but searched and found an object in life, dragging himself along to the remotest parts of the earth.

*Enfin*—besides making water-colours, I draw figures, some from models and others that I find in the streets. I have an old man from the old-folks' home posing for me now.

It is about time I returned your Karl Robert's *Le Fusain*. I have read it several times but must confess that *le fusain*<sup>1</sup> does not go so well, and I prefer to work with a carpenter's pencil. If I could see someone make a *fusain*, it would help; mine look so heavy, and there must be a reason for that. I would like to watch someone, and most likely it would improve my own work. Next time you come, I must ask you some things about it.

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<sup>1</sup> Charcoal.

All the same I was glad I read it, and I agree with the author and wish I knew how to use it properly, but I'll find out some day, just as it is with other things that now seem so mysterious. I return it with many thanks.

I send you herewith a few engravings; amongst them are two German ones by Marchal. I think the Lançons are fine, and especially so are the ones by Green, and *The Mine-Workers*.

I will always be glad to receive duplicates, as well as your letters. Should you at any time read something that is of special interest, do tell me about it, please, as I am not very well informed about recent publications. I know more about the literature of some years ago. During the period of my sickness and shortly after it I read Zola, and though I had always thought that Balzac stood by himself, I now find that he has a successor. Still, it seems to me, dear Rappard, that the time of Balzac and Dickens, the time of Gavarni and Millet, lies far behind us. It may not be so long ago since they have gone, but it is a long time since *they started*, and so many changes have since taken place, which changes, it seems to me, are not all for the good. I once read in Eliot: "Even if it is dead, I think of it as alive." So it is with the period I am speaking of; it is still in my thoughts. That's the reason I am so fond of Rochussen.

You wrote about some illustrated fairy-tales; well, do you know that R. wrote lovely illustrated legends; I mean he made water-colours of legends. I remember a series called *Lenore*, full of feeling. However, his important drawings are not much in circulation, as they are all in the portfolios of collectors.

No doubt, if you continue your collection, you will hear people talk of "the illustrative" all the time. It seems so unfortunate that those wood-engravings are becoming scarcer; it is more and more difficult to find them. Shortly we'll have to hunt for them and may not even find them. Some time ago I saw a complete set of London

pictures by Doré; I can tell you that it was extraordinary, the feeling and beauty of it, for instance, *A Night Hostel for Beggars*. Perhaps you have it; if not, you can get it, more than likely.

Adieu, with a handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

After I finished this letter, I went out and came back with a number of illustrations, old Dutch ones, so I'll send you a few along in this package. There are three Daumiers, one Jacque; if you happen to have them, you can return them to me at some future time; I have always considered the *Quatre Ages d'un Buveur* by Daumier one of his most perfect ones, and the soul in it reminds me of de Groux. I am very glad to be able to send it to you, as these Daumiers are getting scarce. Even if you had nothing else by him, this master would now be well represented in your collection.

I saw some very lovely drawings by Frans Hals in this magazine; all of Frans Hals and Rembrandt in this copy are splendid. I am sending along a very good Morin and an old Doré; these too are becoming rarer.

Of course you have, like myself, heard a lot of gossip about Morin in connexion with "the illustrative," but notwithstanding I am sure you'll enjoy these. We shall have to be on our guard, as all this talk might easily influence us, so I do not think it is superfluous to warn you. I really smell something of Gavarni in these old engravings, and of Balzac and Victor Hugo. Something of the nearly forgotten time of *La Bohème*. I have respect for these old things and, whenever I look at them, I feel stimulated, and they tell me to do my best and to do what I am doing with the utmost sincerity, energy, and strength.

I admit that I too see the difference between a Doré and a Millet,

but why should the one exclude the other? If there is a difference, there is also a similarity. Doré can model parts of a torso and put them together in an infinitely better way than many a conceited ass of the present day who scoffs at him. Take, for example, *Seabathing*, which is more or less a scribble. If an artist like Millet should criticize him (I doubt that he would), he would have the right to do it; but as for those who could not do with both hands what Doré does with two fingers, I maintain that they have no right to; with them it is nothing but *blague*, and it would be better if they kept their mouths shut and learned to draw better themselves. Isn't it ridiculous that nowadays drawing is so little appreciated? Did you see the drawings of Lynen in Brussels? They were so clever and witty, and if one mentioned them to people, they would reply with an air of haughtiness: "Yes, they were rather nice." There is no question but that Lynen will always be a poor man, and he is so industrious and productive. I think he will even become more so as time goes on. Well, as for myself, I too will become more and more active and productive. As long as I have my daily bread, I shall not mind being poor for the rest of my life.

Well, I say once more, adieu, and I hope you'll enjoy the woodcuts. Let me hear from you soon,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

1882.

AMICE RAPPARD,

I received your telegram this morning. I was just about ready to come and see you when I heard that you were prevented from seeing me. I had also considered not going, thinking the doctor might not want you to talk, etc.

I feel that you yourself would not think so. Nor do I feel it would harm you. On the contrary, there is something in the constitution of every painter that is rather curious. The exertion of our work often causes us to feel nervous, weak, and melancholy. But there is also a rebound, which results in our recovery from weakness and so forth through absorption in our work. If one is fed up or annoyed with arguing and discussing certain matters with friends, it is perhaps beneficial to seek solitude, but as far as I know, this is not the case with you at present. So I thought I would go and see you.

On the other hand, I thought: Rappard has a father, a mother, sisters, brothers, maids and menservants, and what-not in his house, and they might be standing sentinel to keep him quiet, by doctor's orders. If I came at such a time, all the fun would be taken out of it, and we both would feel uncomfortable. I want to tell you bluntly that I have felt in myself those two forces of absorption and rebound caused by over-exertion. I have so much faith in the latter, not only for myself, but also for others, that, when I was ill last year, I deliberately disregarded the doctor's orders in some instances (not because I had no faith in him or because I thought I knew

better, but I said to myself: "I live for the purpose of painting, and not simply for the preservation of my constitution"). Sometimes I believe in the mysterious saying, "Whosoever shall lose his life . . . shall find it." This saying seems to be very clear to me.

Well, I recovered SOONER than a couple of others who were ill with the same sickness. It took them very long to get over it. But, my dear friend, I am writing what I, otherwise, would be saying to you. Be very sparing with your energy. Do not use it for things that do not directly lead to your goal.

I say the same thing concerning the making of church ornaments as I say of making decorations. It is, in my opinion, like a waste of powder and shot. This type of work is, perhaps, worth a shot if one's powder-pouch is full and one can refill one's empty gun. But, friend, not one bullet of a sharp-shooter, who has more important affairs, should be wasted, for his position puts great responsibilities on his shoulders. What might be permissible for some would be reprehensible in you, *le mieux en ce cas étant l'ennemi du bien*. Therefore, spare yourself for *le mieux*. Do you share my opinion about your responsibilities, and what depends upon your position? I am not always sure about other people. There are always two points of view for everybody: what one *is*, and what one *might become*. In regard to the first we are not allowed to shut ourselves up with a quiet conscience. As for the second, we must hold it as a formidable reality far above all feeling, since we are full of faults and imperfect, and never responsible, ignoring the ideal and that which is eternal as if they did not exist. I ask myself: "What will Rappard do? What side will he take?"

But this is not exactly the right time to philosophize about it. So let us come to the point. . . .

I am really very anxious to see you soon. It has been over a year since I saw you last; perhaps longer than that, as I was not here when



you came last year. Furthermore, you have not seen much of my work, except my lithographs; so if you agree, let us try to meet soon. This, then, is my proposition. You must let me know what day it will be convenient to have me come to your studio. As long as you have those spells of coughing up blood, I do not believe I exaggerate when I tell you not to come here. Let us agree to postpone that until you are a great deal better, and until those symptoms have disappeared. But the first day you feel like yourself again, and if it is not against the doctor's orders, write me a line, and I will come over to see you.

You see, I am writing this letter before I have even received yours, which you mentioned in the telegram you sent me. I do not suppose that your letter will make any difference, or will make any changes in our plans. Probably it will be in accord with them.

Now I do not want you to think that I am against all decorations or ornamentations. I am only against it *during this time*, and because of the circumstances prevailing here, at present, in Holland. I am *not* against it in a time of great zest, or when there is a spirit of great energy and renaissance, when a certain surplus of power is being let loose in that direction. But I am against it at a time when there is no enthusiasm or animation, generally speaking, especially among the younger generation. Then he who has energy must concentrate—there is a time for being gay, but also a time for being very severe. Really, it is necessary *not to share* the feeling of those who think all will be well, which is, at present, more or less the convention. It may turn out to have been all right during the time that people wore wigs, when people made merry together, and then left everything as it was before.

If there is a decadence, then, please, no ornaments, but look for an inner communion with *Les Vieux de la Vieille*, and ignore the present.

In my opinion, there are certain things, my dear friend, that have precedence over private difficulties. The latter are not the reason I am eager to speak with you. Therefore, I first spoke about other things before I began to thank you for your willingness to assist me, which is a great comfort to me, but also hurts me. Thank you for it. I really dislike intensely having to speak about things in a general way.

It is the same when I come to see you, because I cannot conceal the fact that my future looks so dark to me, and I doubt whether I shall be able to do what I have mapped out for myself. I am hoping that perhaps you can give me some advice, so that I can see a little light. I believe you have an eye for my work, and your judgment will be a great help in certain ways. For instance, if I have many studies of the same thing, should I make a complete whole out of them?

At present I have *many* studies, and I have visions of two or three more important compositions in my mind, and probably the material for those is to be found in my studies. Just because I appreciate your opinion, it is necessary that you know my thoughts, and I think that you have enough imagination to understand my point of view, even if you do not agree with me entirely. If I am against a new trend, it does not mean that I am against that of Israels, Mauve, and Maris. No, these are, in my opinion, the best. Although something has sprung up which perhaps resembles them, it is really contradictory to the masters, and to that I object. Van der Weele, for instance, is more serious and keeps to the strait path. I saw his studies last Sunday. Well, I believe that you also have the right trend, but I am not quite sure that some of your work is not, more or less, a deviation from what I mentioned above. I am willing to take back my opinion—but I imagine it to be so.

Well, as for myself, I too am trying to find the right direction.

Let us say it is that of Israels, Mauve, and Maris—I have not yet found out how far I have progressed, much less how far I shall progress in that direction, but I am doing my best, and shall continue to do so. And this being the case, it is as far from me as the north is from the south to say that I see danger in decorations when done in a masterly way. Though I am searching after something true, something substantial, and something serious, I cannot say I have already found it, but I can say seriously that I am looking for it in that manner. And all that I say about you I also say about myself: we must take care not to diffuse ourselves; we must seek for concentration and vigour.

Really, when I come to see you, it is not because I want to speak about philosophy or theory, but because I want to talk about practical things; just as practical and prosaic as a Monday morning.

You write about a monthly page in the *Graphic* by Howard Pyle. If you mean a composition in the style of Terburg or Nicolaas Keyser, called *Penn and the Colonists*, it has struck me too—so much so that I ordered a first number. Yes, it is damned beautiful, and I also bought a number of the *London News* because of a page by King, called *Labourers in an Underground Railway Train*.

I also subscribed to *Le Salon* of 1883 by Dumas, of which the first number has appeared at one franc a copy, and it will be complete in twelve issues.

I am awfully sorry, *après tout*, that you did not come, but of course it isn't your fault. Up to now I have had scruples about coming to you, because so many would rather not see me, and, generally speaking, I do not care to visit anywhere. The reason is that I have taken that woman and her two children into my house, and people think that for decency's sake they must not associate with me. As I have, however, your provisional opinion already

about that, which differs so much from other people's, I have no scruples against coming to you. I look on the matter in this way: if they are avoiding me for this reason, I do not run after them, as I would much rather stay away than find myself in places where I am *de trop*, especially as I can excuse them a very, very, very little for their point of view in trying to stick to social conventions. And I leave them to their values, particularly because I look upon them as weaklings, and I do not seek a fight. Anyway, I don't want to attack them. Now you see that I AM saving my shot myself this time. Am I pedantic? Take me as I am, and let us agree that I shall hear from you when I may come to see you without going against the doctor's advice.

Again I thank you for wanting to help me, and your letter will be very welcome when it comes, but if you are not allowed to write yet, then you must wait.

Adieu, with a handclasp, and kind thoughts,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

Winter 1882.

AMICE RAPPARD,

On my arrival home, a minute ago, I found your post card, which was delivered just after I had left this morning. I see that you had not only an engagement for the afternoon with your model but also an appointment in the morning. I am sorry you did not tell me, for we might have gone there together. Otherwise the pleasure I derived from seeing your work is not a trifle, and as I am so pleased with my visit to you, I hope now that I did not upset your plans too much by not receiving your card till my return.

I want to say again that I think your work is splendid. The sketch of the weaver, too, is very good, I want you to know. It is *real stuff*.

I wish you had a charcoal drawing of your *Tile-Painters*, and suggest that you consider making one. Why? Because I think that compositions of that kind go very well when worked out in charcoal and in many cases they get a look of greater truth and finer execution. The black-and-white or light-and-shade in itself acquires a peculiar charm and stands on its own feet; it is also well suited to reproduction. Photographs of the *Tile-Painters* will fail because the blue becomes white in the print.

I think the studies of the heads of the blind men are magnificent. Do you agree that we are to visit each other once more before the end of the year?

Herewith a passage of Dickens that expresses so well what is

in the mind of the artist when he is painting a composition of figures.

"I was occupied with this story during many working hours of two years. I must have been very ill employed if I could not leave its merits and demerits, as a whole, to express themselves on its being read as a whole. But, as it is not unreasonable to suppose that I may have held its various threads with a more *continuous attention* than anyone else can have given to them during its desultory publication, it is not unreasonable to ask that the weaving may be looked at in its completed state, and with the pattern finished."—Preface, *Little Dorrit*.

Here you see, *Amice*, how beautifully he expressed it, and this is how a figure-painter deserves to be regarded—in *his entirety*. This is as I looked at you today, and my sympathy for you has thereby been cemented. I want you to regard me in my entirety, which many others fail to do.

What pleases me also is that there are books around your studio, such as Hugo, Zola, Dickens—books with figure-painting. I am going to send you Erckmann-Chatrian's *Histoire d'un Paysan* to read. The French Revolution has as its centre the Constitution of 1789, the modern Gospel, not less sublime than that of Anno 1. And how anyone can be a figure-painter and not feel for that sort of thing is beyond me—I think artists' studios are empty if the modern writings are missing. And I believe that is also your idea.

Do you know that I forgot to take the *Grève des Charbonniers* of which I believe you have an extra copy? I have it myself, but it was for van der Weele, who—*entre nous, soit dit*—needs sorely to see some foreign compositions, for I think he is inclined a little toward Dutch prejudices although he tries to cut loose from them in his large picture.

With regard to printer's ink, I should like to suggest that you

splash and smear a little with it—more or less at random and from memory on a piece of paper or on an old study, just to see what the effect is. But be sparing with turpentine. I think you'll discover things that will be useful and are practical.

The study you made of me came out quite well after it had dried, but in my opinion it would have turned out even better if you had prepared it with charcoal.

And try laying on a wash with a brush filled with water and lithographic crayon. Even if it's just on a scribble, you'll find that many useful and practical things can be done with printer's ink if you take the trouble, probably more than I have found up to the present.

How beautiful are the illustrations of Lhermitte, Perret, and Bastien-Lepage that you have! Beautiful . . .

If I were you, I should make more of those nice heads like the blind men. I am going to try it, too, with a finer pencil.

Adieu, with a handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

With reference to authors, do you not agree that it is only when we know writers like Dickens, Balzac, Hugo, Zola, in all their works that we get a full idea of them? The same applies to Michelet and Erckmann-Chatrian.

I will not accept it as a fact that a painter should do nothing but paint. I mean, there are many who think, for example, that reading books is wasting time, while to me it seems just the contrary. If we educate ourselves in some other type of thinking, one that is, however, directly and forcibly connected with our own, we shall do more and better work. For my part, it is of great importance and influence on my work to look at things from different angles, and

to learn various interpretations of life. The more we love, the more we are going to act, I think; because when love is only a *feeling*, I wouldn't count it as love at all.

Well, I hope that this package of woodcuts is to your liking. What you have already you can return with the others at another time. Then I'll give them to van der Weele. I chose as accurately as possible, and these are, as far as I can remember, those of which I have duplicates. There are also a few French ones. For the rest, we can verify them when you come over, any time you say. Then you will still have to look over quite a number, of which, alas, I have no duplicates.

Good luck with them, and write again soon.



*Winter 1882.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

Thanks for your letter, which I had been expecting; I was not surprised to read that you find the sheets I sent you so beautiful. I myself cannot think of anything more perfect than *Harbour of Refuge* and *Low Lodging House*.

You must come soon now to fetch the rest. I cannot think of a better way for you to find out which ones you have than to come over and select them yourself. In the meantime you can look at the ones I sent you. It would be too troublesome a task to list all the titles. However, if you cannot pay me a visit soon and if you are very anxious to see them, I can make up a package of the extra copies I have and send them to you. You might keep the ones you lack and return the rest to me. Please understand that I shall be delighted to do this should you prefer it.

I have a request to make: will you give me the *bad* print of the *Old Women's Home* by Herkomer (from the French *Illustration*) which you already have? I too have it, but it is for someone I know here. I want to start a collection for the painter van der Weele, who is an instructor of drawing at the Hoogere Burger-school<sup>1</sup> here. He has made about ten etchings—rather poor, but not too bad—and in his studio I saw an excellent sketch of a ploughed field at evening and a splendid little cut, *Loading Hay*, of which he also has made an etching. He is the kind of person who might take to it, I hope,

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<sup>1</sup> The high school.

and it might encourage him to do serious work in black and white, whether it be in etching or lithography or drawing. Having him in view, I should like to ask you to send all the duplicates you have. I think you have *The Gipsies* by Régamey. I hope you'll meet him some day, he is a fine fellow.

This week I bought some parts of a volume of *L'Illustration*, *Le Monde Illustré*, and *L'Univers Illustré*.

Now I have all the duplicates of the six pages of *Enfants Assistés* by Renouard.

I hope I'll be able to get you a copy of Fildes's *Ch. Dickens's Empty Chair*—it is promised to me.

Herewith I send you a sample of the lithograph paper; I scribbled on it a little with lithographic crayon and indelible ink and a *grattoir*,<sup>1</sup> more to try combinations of various methods in one experiment than to advise you to make a drawing like it. I scribbled it on a scrap I happened to have and I haven't the time to do it better. It shows you first of all the kind of paper; secondly, which side is used for drawing; and, thirdly, what you can do with it; but you cannot depend on the indelible ink. Sometimes the prints come off very well, and sometimes the ink runs (because the drawing is wetted before it is put face down on the grained stone, and then it is pulled through the press to print it). So the ink *might* run again on the copy, and in that case you get a black cake instead of your print. Still, it can be done, and you can retouch it on the stone with ink.

At the same time I am sending you two samples of coarse paper, which is, in my opinion, a good medium for setting up wood-engravings.

They will come out very well because it is so rough, and the colour is so lovely.

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<sup>1</sup> A scraper; see facsimile letter facing page 132 for illustration.

The change in my studio turned out very well. The light is wonderful now, and I'm very much pleased about it.

I have finished cutting out and mounting the woodcuts from the *Graphic*. They are arranged in sequence and look much better.

Do you know Dalziel as an engraver? I have his *Public House*—very nice—something like the one by Green.

Well, my friend, perhaps I'll write more pretty soon. I wanted to send you the sample of paper without delay, but I am very hard pressed.

So long, then, write again some time, and believe me,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

I have a beautiful Giacomelli, a big sheet, representing a *Flight of Crows*. I know your lovely Bodmer, *Grands Ducs*, very well, but I do not have it. There must be a lot of beautiful things in that old volume of *L'Illustration*.



✱1883✱

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*January 1883.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

Is your health still on the mend? I am very anxious for news of you.

A few days ago I bought twenty-one volumes of the *Graphic*, from 1870 to 1880. What do you think of that? I hope to receive them this week. You understand, I got them very cheaply, otherwise I shouldn't have been able to manage it. But I heard that they were to be had, so I got somebody else who was interested all warmed up about it.

Since your illness I have been working very hard on black-and-white drawings, and I hope I'll learn something concerning the virtues of black-and-white from these *Graphics*. I wish we could get together again, my dear fellow, as there is so much to do!

Lately I have been working hard on heads—*heads of the common people*—among others, fishermen with sou'westers.

As soon as I have looked through the *Graphics*, I shall write you more in detail about them. I'll surely have many duplicates.

Well, I am anxious to hear more about the lot that you bought, not only if there are duplicates among them, but also what sort of interesting pages you are finding in general. I found a little girl's head by Percy McQuoid, which is lovely, also a wood-engraving after a picture of his, and I have since found some other lovely sheets by: B. Constant, Jules Dupré, Smith, Ridley, Robinson, Régamey,

Green, Thulstrup, Abbey, Reinhardt, Barnard, Ed. Frère, Bückmann, and Waller.

It was not easy for me to get these *Graphics*. For instance, I had to make two portraits of the father and mother of the Jew from whom I bought them (two of each!).

But isn't it a lucky find? But isn't it funny, although they are my property, I haven't seen them yet. They are with a lot of other books in a salesroom, but the Jew will get them out this week. Among the books there is *La Mascarade Humaine*, a hundred lithographs by Gavarni, which I already have. And what about you? The Jew has a lot of other stuff, and there are probably some good things among them.

Well, more soon. I hope you are progressing well in your convalescence.

Hastily,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.



1883.

AMICE RAPPARD,

I simply have to tell you again how much good my visit to you has done me. I am planning now to begin some large compositions, too, and have even set one up, namely, *Peat-Diggers in the Dunes*; it is about one metre by half a metre.

Perhaps you remember I told you that there is something nice going on there in the dunes. It is as if they were putting up a barricade.

I started it as soon as I came away from you, as the thing had practically ripened in my mind already. I have also been thinking about some other compositions; the studies for them are all planned out in my mind.

Without the money you gave me I could not have done it just now.

I had a wooden *passe-partout* made something like yours, but without the frame. I am thinking of making it a walnut-colour, like yours; it is still unpainted.

I can work so much better now because the drawing is in a frame. As soon as I saw your drawings in one, I decided to have one made like it.

I found in *Harper's Weekly* an illustration by Reinhardt; it is by far the best thing I have seen of his, *Washed Ashore*. A corpse has been washed ashore; beside it stand some fishermen, and women giving information about the drowned man to a policeman.

It resembles somewhat a study of yours, but this one really looks like a Régamey—it is a marvellous page.

What a lot of beauties we find, don't you think?

I made the drawing of the peat-diggers with charcoal, *Bergkryt*,<sup>1</sup> and indelible ink. I have not yet tried the great possibilities of printer's ink, so the effect is not quite as strong as the one I have in mind. The only thing I have against charcoal is that it is so easily blurred; unless one takes great care, one loses things one has found, and I feel I do not want to be so careful.

*Amice*, I have a few plans, which I think you will be in sympathy with, for large drawings.

I wish you had read *Les Misérables*—then I could talk about it much better, for most likely the same things would come to your mind; this would not surprise me at all.

I knew the book long ago, but lately I have been reading it again, and so many things come back into my thoughts. You and I were taught history at school, but if you think as I do, then you agree that our study was not all it should have been; it was too dry and conventional. I should love to be able to survey the whole period from 1770 till the present time clearly, especially the French period. The French Revolution is the greatest modern event and everything hinges on it, even the present time.

When I read stories like Dickens's *London and Paris* [*Tale of Two Cities*] and ponder over them, then I think of what beautiful subjects for drawings we could get from this period of the Revolution. They need not necessarily bear on real history, but rather on incidents of daily life, and on aspects of things as they used to be. For example, take the drawings by Howard Pyle and others,

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<sup>1</sup> Literally "mountain chalk." This is most probably the *pierre noire* of the French artists.

and by Abbey, *Christmas in Old Virginia* and *Christmas in Old New York*, which I showed you a little while ago. Well, if we start with those days and then continue in thought down to the present, we survey a period that has changed entirely. And several moments of it are very interesting. And we find them so excellently written in French and English books, so touchingly and truly described, that we can easily imagine everything in this period, so long ago.

Dickens, who most of the time wrote about his own period, could not help writing *A Tale of Two Cities*, and we see that he continually inserts descriptions of former times, for instance, about the London streets before there were lamps.

Just ask yourself, could we find Dutch *motifs*, for example, from the days that the first street-lamps were installed or before that time? Can you imagine a church-pew or a churchyard around 1815? A moving-day or a public promenade, a street on a winter's day, from those times or a little later? Although the period of *Les Misérables* is later, I find something in it for which I have been looking. Those are aspects which arouse in me a longing to know how the world looked at the time of my great-grandfather or not later than my grandfather's time. *Ninety-Three* by Hugo has been illustrated by all the illustrators of the *Graphic* together. Caldecott does such splendid work.

I would like to know what your impression is of *Ninety-Three* and *Les Misérables*. I am sure you'll think they are beautiful. When I visited you, I saw a couple of city scenes that gave me the impression that you were very much stimulated by the figures of the old period.

I hope you will be able to manage, as you said, to come here once more this summer. It is quite possible that my brother will come

from Paris to see me this summer. I want him to see your work again then, too; I hope the two of us can come to see you.

With a handclasp and friendly thoughts,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

*The Hague, 1883.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

I was just writing to you when the postman brought me your very welcome letter. I am glad that you are making headway with your drawing; I did not doubt that you would, as you had made such a masculine start.

Well, I want to begin by saying that I think you are quite right about what you say of the English artist-craftsmen. It is true, especially about the strong contour. I saw in your work what you expressed in your letter.

Take for instance Millet's etching *Les Bêcheurs*, take an engraving of Albrecht Dürer, and particularly Millet's big woodcuts, for example, *La Bergère*; these things show you what one can achieve with such a contour. And it is just as you say, our feeling is: "This is exactly as I would have wanted to do it if I had followed my own inclination," etc. My dear chap, that's well said—and expressed in a manly manner.

Now, another example of strong and bold drawing is the work of Leys, especially the decorations for a dining-room—*La Promenade dans la Neige*, *Les Patineurs*, *La Réception*, *La Servante*, *La Table*.

De Groux has it also; so has Daumier. Israëls himself, and sometimes—only sometimes, I say—Mauve and Maris too cannot keep away from it. Leys's powerful contour has it much more and so has Herkomer.

But when you hear people talk, they pretend that they do not care for it, and their talk is mostly of "colour" and "tone."

Still, in some of his charcoal drawings, Israels has introduced certain lines that remind me of Millet. Speaking for myself, I say frankly that, with all due respect to the masters, and especially to Mauve and Maris, I think it is a pity that they do not point out, when they discuss things with others, what can be achieved with contour, and instead advise us to draw *carefully* and *gently*. And this is the reason that at the present time water-colours are the order of the day and that they are considered the most expressive medium, and to my mind there is not enough attention paid to black-and-white; indeed there exists a kind of antagonism to it. Of course, there is, so to say, no black in a water-colour and, basing themselves on that, people say: "Oh, those black things! . . ." Still, I don't think I need to write an entire letter about it. . . .

I wanted to tell you that I have at this moment four drawings on my easel: *Peat-Diggers in a Bog*, a *Sandpit*, a *Dungheap*, and *Loading Coal*. I had to do the *Dungheap* twice; the first one looked so heavy that I could not continue with it.

I too have not dared to work much with turpentine and printer's ink till lately; most of the time I have used indelible ink, and lithographic crayon, and charcoal, except for the sketch of the *Dungheap*, which looked so poorly that I attacked it with ink, and the result was not bad. It became rather black, and the freshness came back to it, and now I see a chance to go on with it, which I could not have done had I not put the printer's ink on it.

Since my visit to you, I have been working very hard. I had not made many compositions or studies for a long time, so when I once got started, I became so eager that many a morning I got up at four o'clock. I am so anxious for you to see them, for I cannot make head or tail of what van der Weele said; he is the only one who has seen

them. His criticism was quite sympathetic, but he said of the *Sandpit* that there were too many figures in it. He thought it was not simple enough; he said: "Draw that little figure with the wheelbarrow on a little dike against the sky illumined by the sunset; that would be beautiful, while now it is messy."

Well, I showed him the Caldecott drawings, *Brighton Highroad*, and asked: "Is it really your opinion that one is not allowed to bring so many figures into a composition because of the danger of complication?" I said: "Just leave my drawing where it is, and look at this, tell me what you think of this composition."

"Well," he said, "I don't like that one either," adding that, of course, he spoke only for himself and could speak only for himself and that he did not care for that kind of thing nor "do I want to look at such things." I admit that was not badly expressed, generally speaking, but, you understand, I did not think that he was very well informed along those lines, and that was what I was looking for. But otherwise he is an honest fellow, and we went out together very pleasantly, and he showed me some fine things.

I came across the sandpit, too, when I was walking with him; at the time he had hardly noticed it, but I went back there next day.

The reason I have drawn so many figures is that I always saw so many people there loitering round it, which is a matter of the season, as the city gives them employment during the autumn and winter months. And it really is very nice there then.

I have recently had some very nice models: a superb grass-cutter, a wonderful-looking peasant boy, exactly like the figures of Millet; then a chap with a wheelbarrow, the same whose head I drew, if you remember, but then in his Sunday clothes and with a "Sunday" piece of cloth over his eye. But this time he is in his everyday clothes, and it is difficult to believe that it is the same fellow who posed for both pictures.

Those four large drawings are one by one-half metres.

I like the effect of a brown *passe-partout* with a black inside band; it keeps everything so clear-looking.

Man, I wish you could see them, not because I think they are so marvellous, but because I should like to hear what you would have to say about them; in fact I am not quite satisfied with them. The drawing of the figures is not, as yet, sufficiently typical to suit me, although they are really figure-drawings, but I would like to express the actions and structure of the drawing much more boldly.

I think what you say is true about your feeling yourself to be on the highway now, and not on side-tracks or by-paths; I am feeling something like that myself, as this last year, more than ever, I have been concentrating on figures. If you think I have eyes that see, then you can rest assured that I see a great deal of feeling and manliness in your figures; they look healthy, and you are doing good work . . . do not doubt yourself, put things down without hesitation; I know you believe in yourself. I thought the heads of your blind men were superb.

It must not surprise you that some of my figures are so entirely different from those I make at times when I use models.

*I seldom work from memory*—I do not practise that kind of thing very much. Besides, I am so used to work with the natural form now and can keep my personal feeling out of it much better than I could at first. I waver less—and just because I am sitting opposite the model, SOMETIMES I FEEL MORE LIKE MYSELF. When I have a model who is quiet and steady and with whom I am acquainted, then I draw repeatedly till there is one drawing that is different from the rest, which does not look like an ordinary study, but more typical and with more feeling. All the same it was made under circumstances similar to those of the others, yet the latter are just studies with less feeling and life in them. This manner of working is like



another one, just as plausible. As to *The Little Winter Gardens*, for example, you said yourself they had so much feeling; all right, but that was not accidental—I drew them several times and there was no feeling in them. Then afterwards—after I had done the ones that were so stiff—came the others. It is the same with the clumsy and awkward things. HOW IT HAPPENS THAT I CAN EXPRESS SOMETHING OF THAT KIND? Because the thing has already taken form in my mind before I start on it. The first attempts are absolutely unbearable. I say this because I want you to know that if you see something worth while in what I am doing, it is not by accident but because of real intention and purpose.

I am very much pleased to have you notice that of late I have been trying to express the values of crowds, and that I try to separate things in the dizzy whirl and chaos one can see in each little corner of Nature.

Formerly the light and shade in my studies were mostly arbitrary, at least they were not put down logically, and so they were colder and flatter. When I once get *the feeling of my subject*, and get to know it, I usually draw it in three or more variations—be it a figure or landscape—only I always refer to Nature for every one of them and then I do my best not to put in *any detail*, as the dream quality would then be lost. When Tersteeg<sup>1</sup> or my brother then says to me: “What is that, grass or coal?” I answer: “Glad to hear that you cannot see what it is.”

Still it is enough like Nature for the simple peasants of this part of the country. They say: “Yes, that’s the hedge of Juffrouw Renese,” and: “There are the beanpoles of van der Louw.”

I wanted to tell you another thing: I discovered a kind of Faber pencil. This is the thickness of the lead<sup>2</sup>; they are softer and of better quality than the carpenter’s pencils; the colour of the black is

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<sup>1</sup> A colleague of Theo van Gogh.

<sup>2</sup> Here van Gogh has drawn a small black square inside a circle.

softer, and they are wonderful to work with, especially for large studies. I drew a seamstress with it, and the effect was exactly like lithographic crayon. The wood is soft and coloured soft green; they cost 20 cents<sup>1</sup> apiece.

Before I forget it, I would like to borrow your *Harper's* magazines; they have the articles on Holland in them which I should like to read; they are illustrated by Boughton and Abbey. I shall send you a package of old loose copies, illustrated by Howard Pyle and others, so that you can look at them at your leisure. I'll also enclose Erckmann-Chatrian's *Histoire d'un Paysan*, illustrated by Schüller, as well as a few illustrations by Green, which, you remember, I promised you. If you have any duplicates, send them along with the *Harper's*, that is, if you can spare them a couple of days so that I can read them; and if you have finished with Zola's booklet on Manet, please add that to it.

I am very sorry that your health is not yet what it should be, but I think what will bring back your spirits quicker than all the baths, or whatever it is that they do to you in Soden, is to make good progress with your drawings. I can imagine how you must be longing to be back in your studio; and you will be back in it, I suppose, as soon as you can get away. I remember Mauve once became terribly melancholy when he went to such a place (with all due respect to such places). You know I am rather sceptical about that sort of thing—and can sympathize with Bräsig, in Fritz Reuter's *Dried Herbs*, regarding the so-called "water-cure."

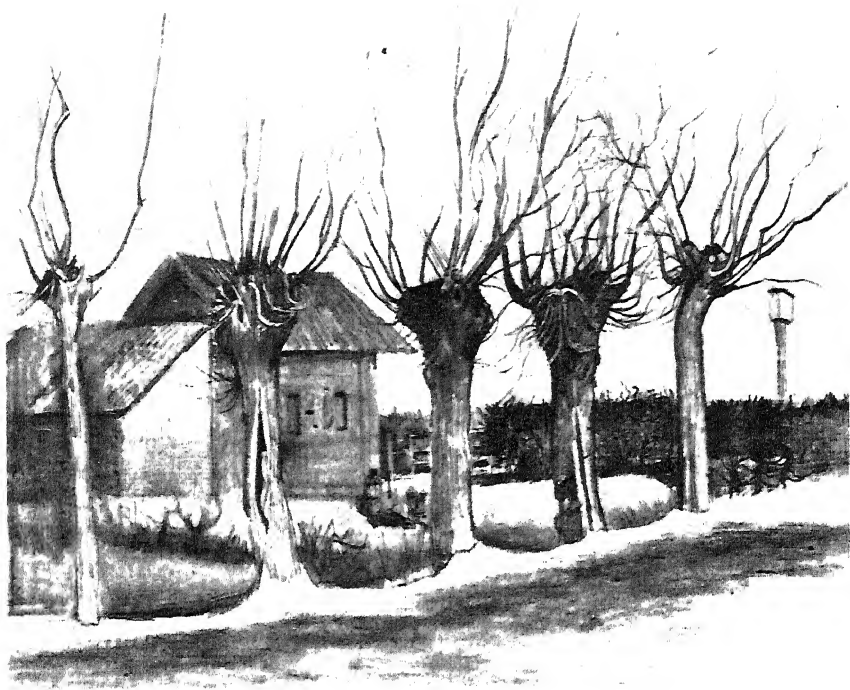
How good the works of Reuter are!

I think you'll like the Erckmann-Chatrian.

Something else I want to tell you: a little while ago I happened to get hold of a marvellous cape belonging to an old Scheveningen fishwife and also a hat, but the latter is not in such good condition.

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<sup>1</sup> About \$.08 or 4d.



The Gate-Keeper's House

Black crayon, 17 x 22 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches

KROELLER-MUELLER COLLECTION, WASSENAAR



And they have promised me a skipper's jacket with a high standing collar and short sleeves.

I should like to see your charcoal work. Perhaps, when my brother comes over, I'll go with him to Brabant. I am not quite sure when he will come. If we should come by way of Utrecht, I'll stop over and drop in. Perhaps, if I can manage, I'll come anyway, as I would love to see the charcoal things. As to you, you must come to The Hague; don't forget that party you told me about.

I feel I'll be able to do some big things if my luck with the models keeps up this summer. I want to keep at the ones that I have set up, so that when my brother comes, they will be well on their way. I saw in *Harper's Weekly* a beautiful thing after Smedley—a man's figure in black on a white sandy road. He calls it *A Generation Ago*. The figure is that of some kind of clergyman, in my opinion, and I got the impression that my grandfather must have looked like that. I wish I had made it.

In the same number there are, after Abbey, two girls fishing at the side of a ditch shaded by willow trees. Both are in the number of *Harper's*, as sketches illustrating an article on an exhibition.

I should like to send you sketch-copies of these drawings, but I have no time.

I asked permission to draw in the old-men's home, but they refused me again. *Enfin*, there are other homes in the villages of the neighbourhood. But I knew a couple of people there who would have served as models. I went there to look around and saw, for example, a little old gardener near an old apple tree, something fine.

Well there comes my model, adieu, send the *Harper's* if you can spare them, with a handclasp,

t. à t.,

VINCENT.

January 1883.

AMICE RAPPARD,

The *Graphics* are here, and I looked through them till far into the night.

I do not know whether you are acquainted with the volumes of '70-'75; you might have them among the lot you yourself bought. If you do not have them, I am sure you'll be delighted with these first volumes. I hope you come across them, and as soon as you get a chance, you must get them. I do so hope that you have them; if not, I'll write you about them in detail, for they contain a great deal that is important, and you need them for your collection.

Take, for instance, a series of the *Coal Mines* by Ridley, done in the Whistler style or comparable to Seymour Haden. There are drawings by Boyd Houghton about America. I had no idea that he was so interesting, and he has some sketches during the Commune—*pétroleuses*, a barricade, etc.

Here are three pages that I had not seen for ten years.

A couple of beautiful pages by Fildes.

Then there are Du Mauriers, sunny and clear even in the shadows.

Enough. You understand that there are treasures among them. I am anxious to hear about your find. Should you have the *London News* of the period '70-'75, let me know what the contents are, and no doubt I'll have duplicates in my new purchase.

I cannot make up my mind what to do. These *Graphics* are in good condition and very nicely bound. It seems rather a pity to

tear them to pieces. On the other hand it is important to have all the items of the same artist together.

Listen, my dear friend, if you happen to have old volumes of the *Graphic*, you know what to do with them, don't you? If you don't know them, then there is a nice surprise in store for you when you see them here, next time you come; you won't easily forget what I'll have to show you.

When I looked over them, all the old memories from dear old London came back to me, from ten years ago. At that time I saw them for the first time, and the impression I got was so strong that ever since I have had them in my memory, for example, *The Foundling* by Holl and *The Old Hags* by Herkomer.

At the same time I feel rather sad to admit that the words of Herkomer, which you sent me some time ago, are true; I mean that, notwithstanding the *occasional* beauty of the later editions of the *Graphic*, in general it is on the decline. But the first ones!!!!

A part of volume '70 is missing, but otherwise all of '70-'80 are complete; no doubt I'll find the rest of the first volume.

But how are you getting on? Please write soon, even if it is a short letter. And if you are still feeling weak and would care to look through some of my volumes, then I'll send them to you. There is something very exhilarating in these masculine, strong drawings; like old wine, it will brace you up.

Adieu, with a handclasp,

t. à t.,

VINCENT.

February 1883.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Several days have passed since I began to look through the *Graphics*.

If I should tell you of all that I think is beautiful in them, without being too superficial, it would really fill a book. I cannot refrain, however, from mentioning a few pages that are absolutely *hors ligne*, e.g., *The Foundling* by Frank Holl. It represents a couple of policemen in their raincoats, who have picked up a child abandoned among the beams and boards of a quay on the Thames. Several inquisitive people are looking on, and in the background one sees through the fog a grey silhouette of the city. Then there is a painting of a funeral by the same artist, in which he shows a fine conception of some sorrowful people entering a churchyard. He calls this *I Am the Resurrection and the Life*. There is another funeral, by Nash, but this is portrayed as on board a ship. One sees the corpse near the bulwark, the sailors are looking on, and the captain reads the liturgy.

I had already noticed the work by C. Green, but had no idea that he could create such fine things as, e.g., his *Bench near the Hospital*, in which we see parents waiting for the doctor. *A Quay in Liverpool* and *Land Once More*, in which we see passengers going ashore; *Here They Come*, showing spectators of the Derby race, are also by Green. (Bückmann has done much the same thing, and has also done very well.) His *Gordon Thompson* I do not



know, and neither do I know the *Spectators at the Derby*. *Clapham Road* is curiously close to the spot where I used to live. This page is incredibly clever; it resembles Dürer or Quentin. . . .

You know the work of Percy McQuoid, of Heilbuth, of Tissot; when one sees that, it seems as if it were the *ne plus ultra* of elegance and gentle, fine feeling. In a certain sense it is really the *ne plus ultra*.

Yet Pinwell and Fred Walker are to them what the nightingale is to the lark. Pinwell, for instance, on a page in the *Graphic* called *The Sisters*, draws two women in black in a dark room, a composition of the utmost simplicity, a quality I can compare only to the pure, full song of the nightingale on a spring night.

Herkomer also had the very first sketch of his *Last Master* under the title of *Sunday at Chelsea*. In a later edition it is written that, when Herkomer showed that page of *Sunday at Chelsea* for the first time, not one of the members on the *Graphic* board liked it, save the manager. He ordered a more detailed drawing, and meanwhile placed the sketch. So you see how changes can be made in the world! There is a later page in the *Graphic* representing the spectators of the definitive picture, *Last Master*.

A *Queue in Paris during the Siege* is marvellous, as well as several London and Irish sketches. Green has *The Girl I Left behind Me*, also exceptionally nice. It is a troop of soldiers returning, and one of them meets the girl, who remained faithful to him. *Irish Churchyard* is not less lovely. Then there were Boughton's *Waning of the Honeymoon*; Nash's *Labourers' Meeting*, *Lifeboat*, *Sunday Evening at Sea*; Gregory's *Hospital in Paris during the Siege*; Bückmann's *Hampstead Heath*; and Fildes's scene of the courtyard of a prison, where police hold on to a thief or murderer whose picture they want to take. The man won't submit to it and struggles. In the other corner of the composition are the photographer and the

inspectors. I here are other splendid small compositions from America by Boyd Houghton, which could be taken for etchings. They are all large pages: *Paris under the Red Flag*, *Mormon Tabernacle*, *Cabin of Emigrants' Ship*, which do not resemble anything else. The details are done on the top, and the aspect is like an etching by—yes, by—whom shall I say?—by Fortuny, perhaps, or Whistler. This strange resemblance is very curious.

Well, it is easy to begin summing up, but to stop is something different. It is difficult, as there is much more; there seems to be no end to it, for so far I have been talking only of the large sheets. Some of the smaller pages are: '93 by Victor Hugo, illustrated by Herkomer, Green, and Small. I have seldom seen a book so well illustrated; happily it is *that* book, as it is so worthy of it.

Write me again soon. You are better, aren't you?

t. à t.,

VINCENT.

To make the measure overflowing I got two more volumes of 1876. I took them although I already have them; but because there are exceptional things in them, I like to have as many as I can find, e.g., *The Old Hags*, by Herkomer, which is a masterpiece (have you got it?), a beautiful *Woman's Figure, During the Reign of Terror*, by Percy McQuoid, also small sketches—cats, Chinese mackerel fishing. Then at the last a large sheet showing a corner of a studio, in which a *mannequin* has fallen over, and is being tormented by two dogs playing with its draperies. It is rather precious, but it does not quite satisfy me. I think it is somewhat pedantic, and too refined. There is also another magnificent illustration by Fildes (for a novel), showing two men in a cemetery in the twilight.

Do you understand that my mind is divided about the following question? If I cut out the pages and mount them, then they will

look much better and I can arrange them according to the artists. . . . But in doing so, I mutilate the text, which is sometimes very useful when I want to look up something about expositions. The whole *résumé*, however, is very superficial. I might damage the '93 of Hugo in mounting it, and then it costs so much in buying mounting-paper. Still, I must admit that the large sheets, especially, look much better mounted than they do folded; that is certain. And also I can study them so much better when they are arranged according to the artists.

Isn't it funny that a person like me, in an artistic city such as is The Hague, should be the *highest* bidder at an auction sale? You would think that other art lovers would turn up, but no. I really did not think I could get these things. . . . Before the sale the Jew had spoken to me about it. I told him I would very much like to take them, but that I could not afford it. Then he told me later that he had taken a risk in buying them, as hardly anyone was bidding, and that if I wanted them, he had them. Of course, then, it was another matter, and with my brother's help, I took them cheap as dirt, at a guilder per volume.

Notwithstanding that I am glad to have them, it makes me sad that there is so little enthusiasm for them. I think it is wonderful that I found such a treasure, but I would rather have the enthusiasm so great that a chap like myself could not think of buying them.

Oh, Rappard, it is like this with many things—much that has great value is not noticed nowadays, or is undervalued and thrown overboard as ballast, or used as scrap-paper.

Don't you think the present times are very sluggish? Or is it my imagination that makes me feel that there is a certain lack of warmth and enthusiasm, cordiality and kindness. The dealers, their consorts, and others say: "It stands to reason that the desired change

will come about. Is *this* explanation satisfactory? I myself do not see yet what "it stands to reason, etc." means to anyone. *Après tout*, it is not very disagreeable to look through these *Graphics*, and while doing it we think very selfishly, like this: "*Qu'est-ce que ça me fait?*" I do not intend to be bored, or dull, even if times are dull. But we are not always selfish, and at times when we are not it grieves us. . . .

February 1883.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Just received the roll of woodcuts. My hearty thanks for them. They all are beautiful. The Heilbuth is much nicer than the one of his I already have. I remember that at the time you told me of their extraordinarily fine *execution*. I mention this because the execution struck me. It was exactly in the manner my brother described, and that brought it to my mind. When you come to see me, I'll show you how the thing is done, and I think you'll be somewhat astonished, as I was myself. And I do not doubt you'll see how these effects of greyish-white and black are obtained.

The page I liked best is the *Light of Other Days* by Ducasse. It is just like a fairy-tale by Andersen. Oh, I think it is so beautiful and real! Accidentally I acquired *Sylvesternacht* by a German, but I don't know who he is—also a *Night Watchman in the Snow*, which is a companion piece, so to speak. And how beautifully and strongly it is engraved!

*That Beautiful Wretch* is tempting. What a contrast there is in engravings; for example, the *Light of Other Days*. I am already acquainted with some of the little figures in it. I believe they have been reproduced in the *Univers Illustré*. Most of them, though, were entirely new to me, and some of them I think are exquisite, for instance, the little figure in white against the background of brown shrubs, which look like dunes or fields of heather, and also *The Walk in the Snow* and the old lady in black near the fire. It is

what I would call "cosy" in the extreme. They may be impressions, but they are refreshing. It is a lovely package, and I thank you once more most heartily.

I found at the same time an exceptionally beautiful page of Vautier, *Eine Verhaftung*. I do so want you to come, not *only* out of selfishness, but because I am sure you'll enjoy making the acquaintance of the first years of the *Graphic*, which will give you "the full certainty" about the importance of woodcuts. *Not* because I believe you are not already much attached to them. On the contrary, I do not doubt that any longer. But there are certain pages which I believe you don't yet know and which make it all the richer and stronger. It seems to me that, when we own a page and can look at it all the time, we like it better.

I believe you know the three Herkomers that I am sending you, but I want you to have them for yourself.

And, *Amice*, I talked a lot to you about Tunwell and Walker. Here is a real Walker of the best quality. Have I said too much about it? You must accept them without any scruples, and also the others of which I get duplicates in the *Graphic*. I think that, for an artist, pages like these form a kind of Bible that he can read when he wants to, so as to get into the right mood. I think it is well not only to know them, but to have them around in the studio.

I am sure you will not want to part with them when you receive them (unless you have them already), and you will agree that it is splendid to have them, and you will immediately feel that you do not wish to part with them.

If you feel more or less conscience-stricken about accepting these sheets, then—just stop and think for a moment—did you regret taking some with you last year? I do not believe so. Because whether or not that is the reason, your collection this year is something of which you think much more than you did formerly. It is quite

natural that if we have these sheets ourselves we think more of them, and the impressions we get become clear and strong, and so I think these will affect you that way. They will become more and more your friends. Well, as far as I'm concerned, I'm not sorry that I gave them to you, because you appreciate them and look at them as they should be looked at. So few feel anything for them and, well, because you have an eye and a heart for these things, your friendship means so much to me and it would be hard for me to do without it.

I used to think, in former years, that most painters paint and feel about art as you and I do, but this is really not so.

That's enough for that. Trust me and accept them without saying anything more about it. When you have quite recovered and come to see me, you'll get more.

I must tell you again, in reference to the woman of whom I wrote you, she is the same type as the principal figure of the *Irish Emigrants* by Holl, I mean the mother with the little child on her arm. Generally speaking, and without going into details, I couldn't give you a better description of her.

Now, my dear fellow, get well quickly, write soon, and do not have any more scruples about the package. Thanks again for yours. In thoughts a firm handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

February 1883.

AMICE RAPPARD,

About eight days ago I sent you a roll of woodcuts, enclosing a letter. Did you receive it?

Since then I have been taking the *Graphics* apart, and there were good reasons why I did this. It is no small task to look through twenty-one volumes, and it takes up a good deal of time. There is naturally a lot that does not interest me and is only ballast; still, I think it is very desirable to keep the work of Small, Herkomer, Green, or Frank Holl together instead of having them all mixed up with things that do not belong together. In taking only the best and most artistic pages, it is possible for me to find the things I want in a few hours. By putting them in order I find the things I need, but I have not yet mounted them. I can now use the covers of the volumes as portfolios, and I will make the engravings out of my *Graphics* complete with all the things I already have. It was quite a job, but rather exciting, and I am very happy to have something like this in my studio now and for ever. There are quite a number of duplicates, naturally.

Now I have another job on my hands. I started a fight with my landlord about a number of privileges, as, e.g., changes in my studio; I should like to have better light, a big cupboard for drawings, portfolios, pictures, and books. It is more difficult for me to obtain these privileges inasmuch as I do not pay the full amount of the rent and he lets me have the house rather cheaply. He has



finally compromised, and he will have some of the things done. He is not very lucky in renting his houses.

Well, it is a step forward, and the studio will gain very much by it; *enfin*, I am quite pleased I tackled him. The idea of starting a fight with him came to me while reading Fritz Reuter's *From My Prison*; perhaps you know the book. It tells very splendidly how Fr. R. and others who were prisoners in a fort got things from the fort commandant. Speaking of Fritz Reuter, don't you think his figure of Bräsig in *Dried Herbs* is splendid—and what about his Haverman? I like his work as much as I do Knaus and Vautier.

For the past few days I have been working on big figures (busts, or rather as far down as the knees), which I intend to use for the wall against the staircase, six pieces on cardboard in black-and-white.

Since you are coming now, it will be much easier to look through the engravings. I am writing you because I enclosed a letter in a roll of woodcuts that I sent you, and this is not allowed (I thank you in it for what you had sent me), and maybe that is the reason that the package has not been delivered to you.

Is your health improving? Are you getting better? And are you working again?

Adieu, write soon,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

I got your roll of woodcuts, but no letter.

February 1883.

AMICE RAPPARD,

I looked over some things yesterday and found a number of other duplicates since I sent you the last ones. This is entirely apart from the *Graphics*, which I have left exactly as I received them, although I am thinking strongly of mounting the sheets when I find time and mounts. I think you'll like Régamey's *Convicts Working Outdoors*. I am sorry I have not a duplicate of the other pages showing convicts; those representing *A Walk* and *A Noon Meal*, marvellously well done, are almost better than the first one. The *Boat Race* by Hopkins makes me think of Percy McQuoid. What a lot of character there is in it, and how much of the mood of the day!

Can you guess by whom *The First Warm Days* is? Beautiful, eh? The little Jules Férats, *Prison d'Autrefois et d'Aujourd'hui*, go well with the little Renouards of Majos. If there are some which you already have, please return them to me some time. Of course there is no hurry. The page by Dodd goes nicely with Green's *Signpost Porter*. *Poor Irish Scholar* is again by M. F. Mertyn Tydvell, who did the *Pawn Office*. Small as the work is, it remains a capital thing, don't you think?

I do not know who did the two small Irish sketches, *Arches* and *Labourer's Home*, but the latter, I think, is especially good. Well, these are just random impressions.

*Good Friday* is, I believe, by Barnes. I just remembered that for

a long time I have had a nice portrait of Corot for you. I will enclose it with the rest.

Whenever I can, I glance through the *Graphics*. There are such treasures in them. I am writing hurriedly while tidying up the studio. I do hope there will be something worth while in them.

Adieu, with a handshake,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

138 Schenkweg, February 1883.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Many hearty thanks for your letter and for the list of woodcuts you sent me. I am very anxious to see some of them, especially those of de Groux and Lançon.

I am very glad that you are getting better so rapidly. You know, before your illness we were corresponding a good deal about lithographs, and we had to stop our correspondence. Since then I have been grinding away, not directly on stone, but with lithographic crayon, which is an excellent material.

If I am writing too often now, just forgive me, but I would like you to write just as often. You will have to make up for lost time, although under the circumstances I don't blame *you*, but your illness.

I can assure you the *Graphics* I have now are very interesting. More than ten years ago, when I was in London, I used to go every week to the show-windows of the *Graphic* and the *London News*, and look at the weekly edition. My impressions of the drawings are still distinct and clear, notwithstanding the fact that so much has happened since. Sometimes it seems to me as if scarcely any time had passed since the old days. Anyway, I have not lost my enthusiasm for the things of that time. In fact it is greater now than it was originally. I do not think for a moment that you will be sorry when you come to look at them. I know that you do not regard black-and-white as most Hollanders do, and although I do

not know exactly whether you are planning to use this medium to express yourself, I believe that you have no prejudice against it. It does not exclude the use of other mediums, and in many cases black-and-white is a medium that makes it possible in a relatively short time to put on paper effects that in any other way would lose something of what we call spontaneity. There is something masculine about it, something rough, which attracts me, and I doubt whether the London sketches like *Low Lodging House*, *St. Giles* by Herkomer, *Casual Ward* by Fildes, have less character and are less striking than if they had been painted. There is another thing. The "chief" of black-and-white is perhaps somebody that neither you nor I know. . . .

In a *compte rendu* of the exposition I see a notice of the work of Lhermitte, a Frenchman who makes scenes from the lives of fishermen in Brittany. They say about him that he is the Millet and Jules Breton of black-and-white, and again and again his name reappears. I should like to see something of his, and lately I have written my brother about him. He has often given me good information, for instance, about Daumier's paintings.

As for my lithograph of the fellow sitting on a basket cutting his bread—it is a failure. When I transferred it to the stone, the upper half had become all blurred, and I could *only partly* restore it with a *grattoir*. Still, you will see there are things in it that prove that we can work very effectively with this process, and that it can reproduce textures, as, for instance, the basket, the trousers, and the muddy boots. And although the first few days I did not like the plate at all, and thought it was very ugly, I am now reconciled, and if I ever start another, I would do it in the same way, but more powerfully.

I read in Herkomer's biography that he tried in his early days (at the time that incident of the rough sketches of *Sunday at the*

*Chelsea Hospital* occurred) to find amongst the artists of that time some who would also choose their types from the people, as he did. He found Gregory, who was the first to show sketches of the Franco-Prussian War (*Paris under the Red Flag*; at first I did not know that this was his; he also did a picture of a field-hospital installed in the hall of a theatre; later he limited himself to scenes on board ship), and Gregory and Herkomer from then on remained friends.

What you say about your convalescence reminds me of the days when I was recuperating last summer. Something happened at that time of which I wish to tell you. Perhaps I wrote to you about it at the time, but I am not sure. Do you remember that, when you visited me during that summer, we met a woman in the street, of whom I told you that she was a model I had found, and that I had noticed that she was pregnant? This was one of the reasons I wanted to help her. Soon afterwards I became ill. She then went to a hospital in Leiden, and when I was myself in the clinic, I received a letter from her saying she was in terrible trouble. Before that time—during the winter when things were very hard for her—I had done what I could to help her, and so there was a great conflict in my mind as to what I should do. Could I—must I—help? I was ill myself, and the future looked pretty dark. Anyway, I got up against the wishes of the doctor and went to see her. I visited her on the first of July in the hospital in Leiden. The night before she had given birth to a baby boy, which was then lying next to her in a little cradle, sleeping with his little nose just above the covers, and unaware, of course, of the way of the world. Even a poor devil of a sick painter like myself knew more than a little baby. I had to think hard, at that moment, what I ought to do. The mother, poor creature, had had a very difficult time at the birth. Are there not moments in life when it is wicked to remain

passive or to say: it is no business of mine? Anyway, I said to the woman: "When you are better, you can come to me and I'll see what I can do for you." Well, *Amice*, besides the newborn child, the woman had another one, a sickly, neglected kid. It was surely some undertaking; very much more beyond my ability than buying the *Graphics*, but what else could I do? A man has, after all, a heart, and if we did not take chances sometimes, we would not be worth our salt—so the woman came to me. I went to live in a house that was not yet quite finished at the time, and they let me have it for a relatively low rental. It is number 138, two doors farther than my former address. We are there now, except that the baby that was in the cradle at the hospital does not sleep now as much as it did those first days in the hospital. It is a cute little lively fellow, and is now about seven or eight months old. I carried his cradle home on my shoulder from the second-hand store, and during the entire dark winter this little baby has been to me like a light in the house, and the woman, although she is not yet strong, because she has to work so hard to keep things together, has become much stronger. So you see that, while I am trying to delve deeper into art, I do the same with life. These two go together.

You can understand that all this has caused many disagreeable situations with former friends, who don't want to look at me any more, which is not surprising to me at all; but I am happy to say that fortunately this was not the case with my best friend—namely, my brother. Because he and I are even more friends than brothers—and he himself is a man who understands such affairs, and not only that, but he himself has helped many unfortunates and is still doing so. I have lost some friends through all this, but have gotten more light and shade in my own house, and have more of a home, although sometimes it seems to me as if I were in a ship tossed by the storm when cares become heavy, as they do at times. *Enfin*, I know very

well that the sea has its dangers, and that we can drown in it. Still I love the sea, and with all the uncertainty of the future I am able to keep a certain serenity.

Now I have a great desire to talk with you again, and I would like it very much if you could possibly come over and look at the *Graphics* with me. I am purposely writing to you beforehand about these changes in my home-life because I do not know exactly what you think about such things in life. If we were still in the days of Bohemia, a painter's studio and household like mine would be nothing unusual, but nowadays we are very far from the original Bohemia, and painters now consider conventions in a way I do not quite understand. But I do not want to offend those who have such feelings. If we were still in the days of Bohemia, I would let things drift, but now I feel I ought to tell you, *Amice* Rappard, that I live with a woman who has two children, and that there are many who, for that and for other reasons, do not wish to associate with me, and since I asked you to come, I thought I must tell you.

You should know all, and, therefore, I must add that when my father heard about it, at first, he did not like it, or rather he did not expect this sort of thing from me, and didn't know what to think of it. But finally we met. I had not seen him for some while, not since I had come here, for I had left home on account of difficulties between us. And now that he knows more particulars of the case, he has changed his point of view, but I had already made up my quarrel with him before the woman came here, and now my father has called on me—since she has come to my house.

But how many misunderstandings there are in life, and how much better everything would go if we co-operated instead of quarrelled with each other! Oh, my dear fellow, I wish there was more of Bohemia in society, and especially among the artists.

You must not think that it is only because of the woman that



painters do not come to see me; that may be one reason, but in general it is because of the way I paint. (Nevertheless, I made a number of good studies last summer.) *Enfin*, I have been rather disappointed in my associations with them. Will this improve???

An artist by the name of Boks, a landscape painter, has been sent to an insane asylum. Before he was sent there, it was very difficult to get assistance for him. During his illness Mauve had helped him financially. But now that he is confined, everyone talks about him with sympathy, and says what a clever artist he is. Among them is someone who has many times refused to give assistance, and neither had he wanted to buy any of his studies, but lately that same person said: "Boks is better than Diaz," which I think is rather exaggerated. The poor fellow told me himself last year that he had received a medal in London some time ago, and that he had to sell it for old silver. Another painter, Breitner, with whom I used to go sketching, and who was also sick in the hospital when I was there, is now an instructor at a high school although I know that he doesn't care for that kind of job. Is it a good time for painters???

When I first came to town I used to go to as many studios as I possibly could to get acquainted and to make friends. I have cooled down on that point, and think that it has its doubtful side, because the painters pretend to be cordial, and really, they would like to kick you out. That is the fatal side of the business. Instead, we should help and trust each other, because there are enough enmities in society, and in general we would be better off if we did not harm each other. Jealousy drives some to speak ill of others all the time, and what are the results? Instead of a great unit, a painters' corps, where unity would mean strength, everyone creeps into his own shell and works independently. Those who are now in the lead make, through their jealousy, a desert around themselves, which seems to me very unfortunate for them. A fight about pictures or

drawings is good in a certain way and understandable, but people should not become personal enemies; there are other ways of discussing things.

*Enfin*, if you have no objection to what I have told you, then plan to come and see the *Graphics* I mentioned, as they are really beautiful, and I would like to talk with you about disposing of the duplicates, as there are many, and of the *best*.

There are quite a number, and they form the kernel of a woodcut collection.

From former correspondence I know that you do not want to accept these as gifts, although I would gladly give them to you since you like and appreciate them, but we can surely arrange it so you will not be conscience-stricken at accepting them. We will find some way, and when you get your health back, we must plan to see each other very soon. There is another reason for my wanting you to come. I have a great number of studies from this winter, and I would like to talk with you about them.

I should have written to you before about my affair with the woman, but it was all so strange to me, and just because of the disagreeable experiences with other friends I felt out of sorts, and the reason I write about it now is not because I think of you as one who has narrow views on life, not because I think that you will not understand my action, but because I think it would not be right of me to withhold the truth when asking you to come down to see the woodcuts, if I did not tell you that everything in my house has been changed since your last visit, and that many, because of this change, avoid me, and most certainly many would not set foot in my house.

The present studio is much larger than my former one, but I am always in fear that the landlord will raise the rent, or will rent it to

someone who is willing to pay more than I do. *Enfin*, as long as I can hold on to it, I will, as it is a very good studio.

If you consider that I have duplicates of nearly everything in the *Graphic*, then you will realize that it is a very large number, and I still have hopes of getting more of the very first issues.

I have been disillusioned before, as well as disappointed with other women, and I would never have thought that I should come to this; but to me there was something so touching about this woman and about the fact that she, a mother, was all alone and deserted, and so I did not hesitate. Neither then nor now have I thought that I was in the wrong, because when a woman and a mother has been deserted, and is desperate, we may not pass her by, in my opinion. She is a figure such as one finds in the work of Holl or Fildes. Should you happen to come before long, don't make your visit too short. The *Graphics* are so beautiful that I believe that, even though you are still weak—if the trip itself is not too tiring for you (but I live quite close to the Rhine Station)—it will be rather a stimulant and it will cheer you up to look them over. *Enfin*, do as you think best.

With a handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

*The Hague, Spring 1883.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

Thanks for your letter of February 27, which I am answering today.

First of all, your questions about lithography. You have seen that the paper is the same for ink or crayon. I got the paper from Jos. Smulders & Co., paper dealers, Spuistraat, in this city. Their place of business is in de Laan van Meerdervoort; they have a large stock of different [lithographic] stones. They called it "Korn" paper; they had ordered it for one of the Cabinet Ministers, who used it for the drawing of all kinds of maps that were to be lithographed. There were a few sheets left, and I took them all. The dealer said at that time that he would order a few sheets again, but whether he did or not I do not know. But anyway Smulders knows all about it, and can have it within a few days if he orders it by mail. It is rather expensive, one florin seventy-five per sheet. The lithographic crayon specially made for that kind of paper is more expensive than the ordinary kind, and in my opinion much worse than the chalk that is not especially made for it. The autographic ink in liquid form and in pieces can also be had from Smulders, but all these ingredients you can find at all lithographers'.

The *grattoir* I used has this form. I got it at Smulders's. It has a so-called "point," for scratching "hairs," quick, small scratches





Nu nog eens - Kent of y het bergkrijt  
 Vert. jaar Krijg ik een paar groote stukken van mijn buis  
 mee van deze groote.



Ik wachte en mee maan sloegen met veel acht op en  
 vergat het niet. Nu dezer dagen vond ik nog een  
 stuk en viel het mij op het zoo mooi was om te zien om  
 te zien.

Nu maakte ik en gisteren een tekening met  
 vrouwen & kinderen <sup>aan de hand</sup> van de kampen van  
 de volksgezondheids <sup>aan de hand</sup> van de groote wordt  
 En K moet ik jeffers <sup>aan de hand</sup> van de groote wordt



Ik krabbelen in 't wilde eenige schreyjes om  
 te de keur van zwart te laten zien

Ik 't niet meer want dankt u?

Ik heb direct aan mijn buis om meer voor het, of de  
 geschiedt. Ziet u eens een stuk sturen als ik het krijg.  
 Doch kent of het niet en kunt het mogelijk ten

meens krijgen stuur of my en doen wat van.  
 Wordt ik ten overnemen of overnemen te ga in  
 gebreken in overnemen met elke krijg

't is net als of er niet en leven in dat goed is en  
 als of 't begrijpt wat men bedoelt en zelf medewerkt.

Ik dankte Ugeener krijg willen nemen.

Door dat de stukken van groot en heeft men geen  
 tekenen of gebreken <sup>het is een klein als een omgeploeg</sup>  
<sup>aan de hand</sup> van de groote wordt <sup>aan de hand</sup> van de groote wordt

Album des Krijgs <sup>aan de hand</sup> van de groote wordt <sup>aan de hand</sup> van de groote wordt

uitgave van de groote wordt <sup>aan de hand</sup> van de groote wordt

is het. Nu opgaaf hield neder en nu meer by

de Luncan, van de groote wordt <sup>aan de hand</sup> van de groote wordt

Deinde nu d. v. v. Meer te dubbel gekregen juist

Distribucion de deuse <sup>aan de hand</sup> van de groote wordt <sup>aan de hand</sup> van de groote wordt

met en te luttel een Krijg met Chiffoniers.

De Krijg ge krijgen des. Scherps. Devoet van

Kalka rijkten. Krijgen kan ik. Doch het is niet. Als camo de

Sumballa het is en ook berynde mendeants te jour de den





like those of an etching needle, but here we get white on black.<sup>1</sup>

It goes without saying that you can use all sorts of *grattoirs*—the shape does not matter—I even used my pocketknife. What I pay for the proofs? He promised to make me a fixed price, also for printing and for stones. The prices I have been paying up to the present will not count because the printer himself was not familiar with the work, and he wants to take his time with it.

There were many failures, etc. . . . I shall have an estimate from him that will be representative; he is going to send me prices of stones of different sizes, for a series of twelve or two dozen drawings, as well as the price of the prints.

When I saw him the last time, he was terribly busy and he said: “Come back about the end of March; then we’ll go over everything together in the warehouse.”

The running of the ink in making copies is not necessarily caused by the thickness of the lines. I have seen enormously big, thick lines come out very clear and pure.

With reference to your friend who draws with a very fine pen—he has to decide that for himself, but I think it is entirely wrong, because I am afraid he is trying to get an effect out of a thing which is not in character with it. If one wants to work with a fine point and still wants to retain force, then *I know of only one thing, namely, etching. If one wants to work with a pen and autographic ink, in my opinion one certainly must not use a finer nib than an ordinary writing-nib.*

Very fine pens, like very elegant people, are sometimes terribly useless and often lack nimbleness and elasticity, which in my opinion ordinary nibs already have, to a certain extent.

Last year I bought at least six expensive nibs and penholders—

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<sup>1</sup> See facsimile letter facing page 132.

they were all rubbish—at a first glance they seemed very useful and practical, but really I don't know—you might get some good ones among them and you might get good results by working with autographic ink and fine nibs—*que soit*—I will be delighted if it comes out right, but I should think one gets more satisfaction with the milder if still aggressive stroke of an ordinary quill pen.

Now something else. Do you know *Berg-kryt* [*pierre noire*]? Last year I received a couple of big pieces from my brother, quite as long as this.<sup>1</sup> When I worked with it, I did not pay much attention to it; I forgot all about it. Well, a few days ago I found another piece, and I was struck by the lovely black colour; yesterday I made a few drawings with it—women and children—at a little window of the soup kitchen for the poor, and I want to tell you that I was exceptionally pleased with the result.

I am scribbling here wildly<sup>1</sup> to show you the colour of the black. Don't you think it makes a beautiful warm black?

I wrote at once to my brother for more of it. I will send you a piece when I get it. But if you know of it and if you can get it where you are, will you kindly send me some of it, because I think I am going to use it continually in combination with lithographic crayon? It is just as if it had a life and soul of its own, and it is as if it knew what you wanted to do and worked in accord with you. I would like to call it "gipsy chalk," because the pieces are so long one does not need to use a drawing-nib. It has the colour of a ploughed field at a summer eventide. I shall buy a half-*mud*<sup>2</sup> if I can get it in such quantities, which I doubt.

*Album des Vosges* is a pretty old publication, but it does exist and it is beautiful.

I found two beautiful Régameys: *A Foundling Hospital in Japan*

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<sup>1</sup> See second facsimile letter following page 132.

<sup>2</sup> Hectolitre.

by F. Régamey, and by Guillaume Régamey some military men in white cloaks, holding black horses by leading-ropes—only a painted sketch, very lovely.

I read a short biography of both brothers—Guillaume is dead, he was only 38 years old. In the beginning he exhibited only a few military pictures, which looked like Bellangé; afterwards he became more himself. He seems to have had a disease that made life difficult for him. Notwithstanding this ailment he kept on working for years. After his death superb studies came to light, which were exhibited, of which no one knew during his life. Fine, eh?

F. Régamey travels much, and as you know, he is very strong in everything Japanese. In general I feel as you do about French woodcuts. The English have found more of the "soul" of wood-engravings. Their original character is as marked as that of etching, as, for instance, in Bückmann's *London Dustyard* and in *Harbour of Refuge* by Walker. Still, Boetzel and Lavieille have such qualities also, but Swain tops them all.

The Lançons engraved by Moller have a very original character too. Boetzel's work after Feyen-Perrin, for example, and the Millets by Lavieille have soul in them. But otherwise they often deteriorate into industrialism and become meaningless.

You ask me about de Bock—I have not been to see him for a long time; it was before my illness. I noticed that he always said to me when I came to see him, or when I met him somewhere: "Oh, I will come and see you some time," in such a way that it made me think he meant (or at least that is how I interpreted it): "But don't come to see me till I call on you," which I think will not happen. Anyway I have not gone there any more because I don't want to push myself. I know de Bock is doing a large painting at present. Last winter I saw a few of his small ones, which I liked very

much. I met him twice lately, not in his studio but in the street. The last time, he wore a fur coat, kid gloves, etc., in a word he looked like a man in prosperous circumstances, and in general I hear that he is what we call flourishing. I do think his work is often very fine, but it does not remind me of Ruysdael, for example; perhaps also it will not last long or make a very deep impression.

I really should like to go to the studio to convince myself that his work is as beautiful as I want it to be, and now, involuntarily, I am doubtful. Last year my impression of him was not so favourable. He used to speak about Millet and how big and broad Millet was; well, that was all right. I remember I once talked with him about it when we were on a walk in the Scheveningsche Boschjes. So I said this to him: "But, de Bock, if Millet were here, would he look at the clouds and that grass and the twenty-seven tree trunks and would he forget the little man sitting there eating his lunch during the noon hour on the stump of that tree with his shovel next to him? Would he forget all that? Or would he see that little part of the panorama where the little man sits? Perhaps that would be the point on which he would concentrate. I don't think that I am less fond of Millet than you are, and I have said I am delighted that you admire him. But please excuse me if I say that I do not believe that Millet looked at things the way you are pointing them out to me. Millet is especially a painter of 'humanity'; he certainly has made many landscapes, and I know that they are beautiful; still, it is difficult for me to understand that you really mean what you say when you see him above all that which you are now pointing out to me."

*Briefly, I think our friend de Bock is more like Bilders than Millet or Ruysdael. But I may be mistaken, or I may find later that there is more to him and to his work; I wish nothing better than that—I am fond of Bilders and there is not a painting of de Bock*

which I see but I find in it boldness and friendliness; but there exists an art closer to my heart, an art less florid but more thorny.

I know that even Ruysdael's work changed in aspect, and his most beautiful pieces are perhaps not his waterfalls and forest views but *L'Estacade aux Eaux Rousses* and *Le Buisson* in the Louvre, *The Mills* in the v. d. Hoop Museum, *The Bleaching-Ground* at Overveen in the Mauritshuis, and others, older ones, just ordinary things to which he came in later years through the influence of Rembrandt and Vermeer of Delft.

I wish that something like that could happen to de Bock, but will that be the case? I should pity him if he is going to land more in the thorns than in the flowers—*voilà tout*—and although I have been for a little while *à froid* with him (without any intention on my part), there has happened nothing of a more serious nature between him and myself than a few discussions about Millet and similar topics. Only I don't see exactly that at present he is going in the direction of Millet or Ruysdael. For the time being, de Bock is like Bilders, I mean not *Gerard* Bilders but the old man; and I do not say that in a slighting way. Besides, if I did not care a good deal about him, I should not write so much about him either.

I am feeling so happy about a change in my studio, especially because the experiments I made with different models showed me that a lot had been gained. Formerly a figure did not throw a sharp shadow, because the strong reflection lit it up again, so all effects became neutralized; that drawback has now been overcome.

Don't think I am going to give up lithography, but I have had so many expenses and have had to buy so many necessary things just lately that I cannot tackle the cost of new stones now. I do not think I am losing anything by waiting a little while. But I am really longing to work more with that *Berg-kryt*.

Do you know that I sometimes have a great longing to have a

look at your studio and I should also like to see the country where you take your walks and rummage about for subjects? In Utrecht there certainly are some beautiful little alleys and courts.

*The Hague is beautiful* and there is such an enormous variety here. I hope to work hard this winter. Often there are financial difficulties, which hold me back, as I know you will understand, but just because of that I want to and must work very hard, and shall concentrate more and more on black-and-white. The water-colours and paints are so expensive that I have to stop doing that kind of work, while with a piece of chalk or pencil one has only the expense of a model and some paper. I had sooner spend the money I have on models than on paints and supplies. I have never regretted money spent on models.

Have you the portrait of Carlyle—that beautiful one that was in the *Graphic*? At present I am reading his *Sartor Resartus*, the “Philosophy of Old Clothes.” Among “Old Clothes” he counts all sorts of conventions and all dogmas with regard to religion—it is beautiful—and true and humane. Much has been said against the book as well as against his other books, and many look upon Carlyle as a monster. A joke about the “Philosophy of Old Clothes” is this: Carlyle not only undresses his characters, but he skins them as well, or something to that effect. I don’t think that it is true, only he is honest enough not to call a shirt by another name. To me it seems that nothing is further from his mind than to belittle man and his works—on the contrary he tries to give man a high place in the universe. I see in him much more of love for mankind than bitter criticism. Carlyle has learned a great deal from Goethe, but even more from a certain MAN who did not write books himself but whose words, though not written down, still remain—I mean Jesus, who, long before, talked of all sorts of conventions and counted them amongst “Old Clothes.”

This week I bought a new sixpenny edition of Dickens's *Christmas Carol* (London, Chapman & Hall). There are seven illustrations in it by Barnard, e.g., *An Old Curiosity Shop*. I am very fond of Dickens, but these two fairy-tales (I forgot to mention that *The Haunted House* is also in this book) I have read every year, ever since I was a boy, and they are always new to me. Barnard understood Dickens very well.

A little while ago I saw again some black-and-white drawings by Barnard. They were photographs of drawings, a whole series of Dickens's figures: Mrs. Gamp, Little Dorrit, Sikes, Sydney Carton, and a few others. The figures were highly finished, and yet they were so striking, like cartoons.

In my opinion there is no writer comparable to Dickens; he paints, with words. His figures are resurrections. On a child's print I found a little wood-engraving after Barnard by Swain—a black policeman pulls along a woman in white who struggles to get away, a group of street-urchins follow them from behind; with such slight means it is hardly possible to go further in expressing the true character of a slum. I'll try to get such a print for you; although it is only a small scribble, it is worth having.

I can't get the page of *The Empty Chair* for you. It is by Fildes and it was promised me with others. The man remembers now that he got rid of them a few years ago.

Write again soon; I wish you good luck with your work. By the way, I have an almost complete edition of Dickens in French, translated under the supervision of Dickens himself. I believe you once told me that you could not enjoy Dickens's English because it was sometimes a little too difficult, as in the case of the dialect of the miners in *Hard Times*. So if you ever want this French edition of mine, it is at your disposal at any time. I even would not mind exchanging my French Dickens for something else, if you care to do

that. I am thinking of getting the English Family Edition. Well, adieu.

A handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

The illustrations of John Leech and Cruikshank have also much character; the ones by Barnard seem to be better digested—although I think Leech very powerful in the drawing of street-urchins.

In the *Graphic* of February 10, 1883, there is a little figure by Frank Holl—a child in a little attic-room; it is so real, I bought the issue especially for that.



1883.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Thanks for your nice letter; your finding that my drawings have something to them gave me special satisfaction.

I do not wish to discuss generalities about technique, but what I anticipate is that when I become stronger in what I shall call my mode of expression, people will say *more than ever* that I have no technique.

It goes without saying that I agree with you entirely that I must express myself even more strongly in my present work—and I am labouring to do so—but—that they then will understand me better . . . no. . . .

That does not help out the argument of that prig who asked when he saw your work: “Does he paint for money?” It is the argument of a milksop, in my opinion. The rare mind of the creature is proceeding on the axiom that one’s originality is reduced if one earns money with one’s work.

To let this pass as an *axiom* because it cannot possibly be proven is, as I have said, the usual way of such milksops and lazy *Jesuits*.

Do you think that I do not care for technique? Certainly I do, but only in order that I may say what I have to say, and when I cannot yet do that satisfactorily, I try hard to correct myself. But if my language is not to the liking of the speakers, or of the audience, I do not care a rap about it. You remember you once said that if someone has something to say that is useful, true, and necessary,

and can say it only in terms that are difficult to grasp either by speaker or audience, he should not say it. I want to keep to this point for a moment, for the reason that I have often found in history a rather curious phenomenon.

You must understand me properly: If one speaks to an audience that knows only the mother tongue, it would be absurd to address it in another language—that is understood. But now the second part of the question.

Suppose a man has something to say and his audience has an instinctive inkling of it. Then—there will constantly appear this phenomenon: that the *speaker* of the *truth* will be said to have little *oratorical skill*—and he will not be popular. *Most* of his audience will call him too ponderous a speaker and therefore *verrückt*.

He may call himself lucky if there is one, or perhaps a few, whom he has swayed, because those people did not come to hear oratory but really something of the truth, to be enlightened, and to get a freer outlook, a more intelligent viewpoint from the speaker's words.

And now as to the painters—are we to see the purpose of art, the *ne plus ultra*, in particular daubs of colour, in caprices of drawing—what is called distinction of technique? Most certainly not. Take for instance a Corot, a Daubigny, Dupré, Millet, Israels, they surely are our greatest predecessors—their work is beyond *daubs of paint*. The difference between them and the “stylish” people is something like the difference between an oratorical tirade (as for instance that of a Numa Roumestan) and a real prayer or—a good piece of poetry.

So in order to do good work technically, we *must* say our say better, more exactly, more intimately, and with as few words as possible; then we need not bother about anything else. The reason I say this is because I have noticed that you sometimes see what you

consider mistakes in your work while I look on them as virtues. In my opinion *your* technique is much better than, for instance, Haverman's, because your brush-stroke has something recognizable, original, motivated, and compelling; with Haverman it is always conventional, it always reminds one of the studio and not of Nature.

I feel something fine in those sketches of yours that I saw—*The Little Weaver* and *The Old Hags of Terschelling*. They are a plunge into the heart of things. I have really very little feeling for Haverman; he is dull and boring. I am afraid—and yet I congratulate you on the fact—that you too will hear remarks about your technique, perhaps not about your subjects, and . . . this will continue even if your brush-stroke, which is already so good, has become better and has even more character than it has now.

Even now, however, art lovers can appreciate things that express emotion although, alas, we are no longer in the time of Thoré and Théophile Gautier.

Think it over—is it right to talk so much about technique at the present time? You'll say I am doing it here myself—and I really regret that I am doing so. As for myself, I intend, even when I am a better master of my brush than I am now, to tell the people systematically *that I cannot paint*. Do you see my point? It will be precisely when I have acquired a technique of my own, a more complete and concise one than I have now. Herkomer said something I thought very beautiful, at the opening of his Art School, before a number of people *who knew how to paint*. He begged his students not to paint as he did himself, but according to their own selves. He said: "What I want to do is not to liberate my own originality, nor to win disciples for the *teachings* of Herkomer."

*Entre lions on ne se singe pas.*

Well, I have been painting quite a bit these last days, a *Girl Winding Bobbins for Weavers* and also, separately, the figure of the

weaver. I am hoping that you'll see my oil-studies some time, not because I am so pleased with them, but I think it will convince you that I am practising hard. And if I say I care little about technique, it is not because I want to spare myself, or that I am trying to evade difficulties, as that is not my way of doing things.

Besides I want you to get acquainted with this part of Brabant. To me it is far more beautiful than the surroundings of Breda; it is really marvellous just now. There is a village here called "Son en Breugel," which looks exactly like Courrières, where the Britany-folk live—but the people are even finer to draw. When one becomes more interested in form, one gets bored with the "Dutch costumes" that fill the souvenir-albums that are sold to foreigners.

I dislike, Rappard, to write or to speak about *technique* in general, although I sometimes have a longing to speak to you or to someone else about the manner of execution of this or that idea which I may have. And I do not think lightly of the usefulness of such conversations. This last thing does not exclude what I said first. Perhaps I expressed myself wrongly. The first thought I cannot very well put into words; it has its roots not in something negative, but in something positive. In the positive sense art is something greater and higher than our own adroitness or our knowledge, or even greater than science. Art, although produced by men's hands, is something not made only by hands, but of a deeper source. It springs from the soul, and in the adroitness and technical knowledge of the artist I find something that reminds me of what, in religion, is called self-righteousness.

My sympathy in the literary field, as well as in the artistic, is drawn most strongly toward those artists in whom I see that they work from their soul. For example, Israels is clever as a technician, but Vollon is, too; yet I see something more in Israels than mere

technique. He has something entirely different from the masterly reproduction of material, something different from light and shade, something more than colour. At the same time it becomes something entirely different *through* the true rendering of light effects, material, and colour. What I see in Israels so much more than in Vollon, I also see in Eliot, and also in Dickens. Does it originate in the choice of subjects? *No*; that is merely effect, not cause. And what I want to get at among other things is this: Eliot is masterly in execution, but also has something else that goes deeper; it is something peculiar to genius. One is a better man after reading those books; they have an awakening power in them.

Unwillingly I am writing a lot about exhibitions. To tell the truth I seldom think about the matter. Just now I am accidentally thinking about them, and I am surprised at my thoughts. I should not be telling you them fully if I did not add that there is in some pictures something so truly honest and good that, whatever is done with them, whether they fall into good hands or bad, into honest or dishonest hands, something good will go out from them. "Let your light shine upon the people" is something that I think is every painter's duty; but it does not follow that "letting the light shine" is merely a matter of exhibitions. Indeed I am compelled to say that I wish for a *better chance* than exhibitions to bring art to the people. I would rather put the candle into the candlestick than hide it under the bed. *Enfin* . . . enough of this.

I am rereading these days *Felix Holt, the Radical*, by Eliot. This book is very well translated into Dutch. I hope that you know it. If you don't, see whether or not you can borrow it from somebody. There are certain views on life in it that I think are excellent, deep things said in a witty manner. It is a book written with great gusto, and certain scenes are written in a manner suggesting the drawings of Frank Holl or someone like him. Eliot uses the same

type of presentation and viewpoint. There are few writers who are so thoroughly sincere and good as Eliot. This book, *The Radical*, is not so well known in Holland as, for example, her *Adam Bede* and her *Scenes of Clerical Life*, and that seems as great a pity as the fact that so many people do not know the pictures of Josef Israels.

I am sending you with this a little book on Corot, which I think you'll enjoy if you don't know it already. It treats of certain phenomena of life with very accurate insight, and yet is simply the catalogue of an exhibition that I saw at the time. I think it is extraordinary how Corot persevered with his work for all those many years and how he ripened. Just notice what he did at the different stages of his life. I have seen things belonging to his earliest period, real work, which were already the result of years of study; they were as honest as gold, sound through and through, but how people must have despised them! The studies of Corot were a lesson to me when I saw them, and at the time I was already struck by them and by the work of other landscape-artists.

I would compare your *Rustic Cemetery* to Corot's studies if it were not that I see too much technique in yours. The feeling is identical—a striving to give only the intimate and the essential.

What I am telling you in this letter comes down to this: that we must try to get so far beyond the secrets of technique that the public gets past that matter entirely and swears by all that is holy that we have no technique. Let our work be so *servant* that it *seems* naïve and does not reek of our cleverness.

I feel sure that I have *not yet* reached this point, but I hope I shall, and I believe not even you, who are further than I am, have reached it.

I hope you'll see more in this letter than a dispute over words. I believe the further we dig into Nature the less we are attracted by the tricks of the studio, and yet I want to give them all the credit

they are entitled to; seeing others paint and visiting studios is an urge in me still.

De Genestet<sup>1</sup> puts it, as you well know, like this:

Not in books did I find it,  
And from the 'learned' have I learned but little . . .

but we might paraphrase this and say:

In the studios I did not find it,  
And the <sup>painters</sup>  
          <sup>experts</sup> taught me little.

Does it shock you, perhaps, that I put painters and experts on the same plane here? But it is damned difficult not to be vexed with those milksops, like the one who said: "Does he paint for money?" One hears such tommyrot every day and one gets furious with oneself for having taken it seriously. That's my feeling, and I dare say you feel like that yourself at times.

We say we don't care, but all the same it makes one feel nervous as when we hear someone sing off key, or when a *street-organ* pursues us. Don't you find that true, about the street-organ? It is as if the thing were intent on souring us with repetitions of the same tune, wherever we go.

As for me, I am going to do what I tell you; when they say to me this thing and the other, I am going to interrupt them without letting them finish their sentence. That is the way I treated a certain person who gives you one finger instead of his whole hand. (I did that yesterday with a worthy colleague of my father.) I had one finger ready, and it was with that—while keeping a straight face—that I carefully met his one finger when he was ready to shake hands; he could not complain about my act, but he understood I returned his contempt.

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<sup>1</sup> Well-known Dutch poet.

Well—do I lose anything when I vex people like that? Not at all—such people are hindrances—and when I write to you about some of your own expressions, it is because I want to ask you: “Are you sure that those who extol technique to the skies are *de bonne foi*?” I ask you this because I am convinced you are trying to avoid *atelier chic*.



*Drenthe, September 1883.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

I am writing today because your letter from Terschelling crossed mine.

I am pleased to hear that you will bring back something from your trip, and I see from what you tell me of your studies that it will be something very useful. I am sorry I did not see your sketch of the fish-market picture.

It may be that what I wrote you concerning it was wrong. I said: "If you keep the division of the space as it is now, to my mind the only thing to save it would be to divide up the light and shade so as to produce an intentional effect of *chiaroscuro*. But this may be entirely opposed to your intentions, as, for example, if you wanted to make the picture grey. Still your sketch probably gives a true indication of the area of the picture and of the space your figures take as compared to the space of the houses, sky, and street. And then it struck me at once that the figures would be overwhelmed by the rest and there would be too much of a *clash* between figures and surroundings.

*Enfin*, I am damned sorry that I didn't see the first sketch but, as you surmise, I am not forgetting that it is YOU who are doing the picture in question and not I. I base my reason on something you won't contradict, which is that you are making a PICTURE. And a picture—whoever is doing it, you or anyone else—has just one thing to say, but that must be said *clearly*.

Speaking of van der Weele, I remember having said a thing to him about the picture for which he received a medal in Amsterdam; it was—AND HEREIN I DIFFERED WITH OTHERS—that I appreciated very much his having preserved unity and style, notwithstanding all the various things he had painted in it; and I said that it was surely a *picture*, something very different from a realistic study from Nature.

*Enfin—après tout*—as I have not seen your sketch, but just a little scribble, I do not doubt that there will be things of merit in your painting. But what I said I will repeat again, and I might just as well point out that I *fear* your foreground cannot carry all you have put into it, and it will become just a mass of paint, unstable and woolly—what one calls *mou*. If it were mine, I could not go on with it for the simple reason that everything was too much in front, so that the picture began with what should have been in the second plane. The *first* plane, the solid base, was missing. I should reproach myself in the same way that I am reproaching you. It is something that *very often* happens to all painters, and the only remedy is to transfer it to a larger canvas.

By the way, do you know the *Ordered Off* by Frank Holl in the *London News*? I brought it back with me from Utrecht together with a *Shepherd* by Thompson.

Greetings, and I hope you will come over in October. Write me in advance, if you can, when you are coming.

With a handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

1883.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Although you are travelling, I feel like writing you just the same. Thanks so much for the books you sent me. To *Mes Haines* by Zola, I would like to apply Z.'s own words concerning Hugo: "*Je voudrais démontrer qu'étant donné un tel homme, sur un tel sujet, le résultat ne pourrait être un autre qu'il n'est*"; also Zola's further words on that occasion: "*Je ne cesserai de répéter que la critique de ce livre, telle qu'elle s'est exercée, me paraît une monstrueuse injustice.*"

Quite gladly I will begin by saying that I do not belong to those who are furious with him for writing this book. I am learning to know Zola by it; I am learning to know what his weak side is—to know that his knowledge of the art of painting is insufficient—it is *préjugé*, instead of being *jugement juste* in this special case. But, my friend, it is far from me to be vexed with a friend because he has his faults. On the contrary I like him the better for it. I therefore read his article about the Salon with a quite peculiar feeling. I think he is entirely wrong, except in the part about his appreciation of Manet—I too think Manet is clever—but it is interesting to get Zola's idea about art. It is just as interesting as, for example, what a *landscape*-painter says about a *figure*-painter; in other words it is not his *genre*, and therefore he is superficial and incorrect. So let him talk when he says: "Such a thing is not finished," or: "It is not clear enough"—let him talk. It only makes one think, and I find it

is original and sparkling with life all the same, even if it is incorrect and wrong and lopsided.

It is interesting to hear Zola speak about Erckmann-Chatrian. Here he is not on such unsafe ground as when he speaks about art, and his criticism is very often much to the point. I am quite pleased when he reproaches Erckmann-Chatrian for being too egotistical, and Zola is right when he says that E.-C. are silly in their description of the juristic situation, for they are not at home in those circles; but I ask myself, is Zola himself at home there or in Alsace? It seems to me, if he were, he would be a little more interested in those people of E.-C., who are to me as lovely as the pictures of Knaus and Vautier.

As to the "little mustard seed" of egotism which E.-C. give to their characters, like the Old Rabbi David and Wagner and Teyl, I like them for it. Just this is the reason why I think their characters are so sublime and *dès lors* they are *hors ligne* for me.

Zola has this in common with Balzac: that he knows nothing about painting. There are two types in Zola's works—Claude Lantiers from *Le Ventre de Paris* and Thérèse Raquin—who are like weak shadows of Manet; they are a kind of impressionism.

*Enfin*, I find Balzac's painters too ponderous and very boring. Well, I could keep on talking about this, but after all I am not a critic. Only just one thing more—I like it that he hits Taine; it will do that gentleman good, because T. is often *agaçant* in his *mathematical* analysis, even if I have to admit that his opinions show penetration at times. I thought that when I read what he said about Dickens and Carlyle: *Le fond du caractère anglais, c'est l'absence du bonheur*. Well—I won't insist upon the more or less correctness of these words, but it testifies to deep thought, and he is one who stares into the darkness till he can see something when others have ceased to see anything. I really like those words he said; they are

fine—yes—very fine. They say more than a thousand other words could, and so I take my hat off to Taine.

I am so happy that I can look at the Boughtons and Abbeys at my leisure. *In the Potato-Field* I like best of all, and *The Belfry-Ringers* by Abbey. The text that goes with them is somewhat dry; it is full of stories of hotels, and people selling antiques. That I read it with a certain pleasure comes from the same reason that I read Zola—for the personality of the author.

By the way, did you notice that Zola did not even mention Millet, although I read a description by Zola of a churchyard full of peasants and another of the death-bed and funeral of country-folk which were as beautiful as if they were pictures by Millet? The omission might be due to the fact that he does not know Millet's canvases sufficiently well.

I also want to tell you that I found an extremely fine magazine-page by F. Green (he may be a brother of C. G.). It is of a party in the foundling hospital in London, with a little orphan girl sitting at a table. Oh, I know you'll be crazy about it. . . .

If you are already away on your trip, I wonder how your drawing is getting on. I myself am working on my *Potato-Diggers*, and I have another figure of an *Old Woman* and a few rough sketches of people, which I did during the potato-harvest, such as a man weeding, and a fellow with a sack, and one with a wheelbarrow. You must come over when you have returned from your trip.

I must tell you that, besides this *Sower*, I have made about seven or eight like it, but I have put him in an open field with clods of earth round him, and above him a sky.

I would like to ask Zola and others with him this question: "Can you tell me if there is a difference between a dish with a codfish painted on it and a dish that has a figure of a man on it?" And: "Is there or is there not a difference between Rembrandt and van

Beyeren (technically the one is as clever as the other), or between Vollon and Millet? . . .”

Have you seen the new magazine, the *Pictorial News*? There are some very good things in it, although often it isn't worth much.

I wish, my dear fellow, that we could be a little more together, but *qu'y faire*? If you have time and care to write me, the sooner the better.

The summer issues of the *Graphic* and the *London News* are not very interesting, I think, except that the *Graphic* has a very good Caldecott in it, as well as a Reinhardt, which is not quite as good, while the *London News* has a Caton Woodville. I think the F. Greens are masterpieces.

My brother wrote me about a very marvellous exposition in Paris, "*Les Cent Chefs-d'Œuvre*."

Well, dear friend, bon voyage, good-bye, and see if you can find the time to write me.

With a handshake,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

※1884※

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*Nuenen, 1884.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

In a few words I want to tell you what has happened here and what is uppermost in our minds. My mother had an accident on leaving the train, and it is rather serious. She broke her right hip-bone. It was quite successfully set, and she is calm and does not suffer much pain.

But I need not tell you that we are all quite worried about it, and I am very glad I am here. You know that my sisters are both very weak, and I have plenty to do.

Otherwise my sisters are not bad; the one who usually is in Soesterberg<sup>1</sup> is the weaker of the two. Do you remember the sister who was home when you were here? Well, I cannot find words to tell you how well she is bearing up these days.

There might be a lot of trouble with Mother, but the doctor assures us that she will recover completely—*although under the most favourable circumstances* it will take at least a half-year before she can walk again.

Just imagine, there was no doctor in the village (or rather there is, but Father would not have him), so we had to send to Eindhoven for one, and he had to come by carriage.

It surely is a calamity—and it is difficult for me to foresee all the consequences.

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<sup>1</sup> A small village in the province of Utrecht where there is a sanatorium for the feeble-minded.

*Enfin*—we have to live from day to day, and sufficient to the day is the evil thereof. It is a blessing that she is so calm and keeps so cool-headed, which is helping us a great deal. We are getting on very nicely.

Won't you write me soon? And have you started on something new since I saw you?

I am still working on the same weavers, but for some time I shall be able to work only half time, I am afraid, on account of what has happened. There are so many things that have to be done.

I have already written to tell you that I have been making a number of water-colour studies out of doors. Some time I'll make finished water-colours out of them, since I have to stay in so much nowadays.

My mother and father also send you their kind regards. During the forenoon my mother had gone from Nuenen to Helmont and, on leaving the train, she missed her footing. They had to bring her home by carriage, and under the circumstances—the transportation here; it might have been worse, although it is bad enough—we have reason to be thankful. All the same it is a terrible situation.

Please write soon if you can.

Kind thoughts and a handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

Nuenen, February 1884.

AMICE RAPPARD,

That you have not written a single line is not exactly very cordial of you; however, as I think that you probably agree with me on this point, we will not comment on it any more.

Another matter is that my mother's health is rapidly improving. She is getting on much faster than we dared hope, and the doctor assures us that in about three months she'll probably have recovered.

We planned, I think, that I was to send you a few water-colours this winter. But to tell you the truth, since I heard absolutely nothing from you, I felt not the least inclination to do so. Therefore nothing came of it, although I have made a few.

These last weeks I have been doing the weaving-mill. I am getting on with it. These last days I have been painting in the fields, and I did a little country churchyard. Besides that, five pen-drawings of weaving-mills.

I have not had many new woodcuts this winter except a fine page from the Christmas number of the *Graphic: For Those in Peril upon the Sea*; a sheet by O'Kelly, *Irish Emigrants*, and by Emslie, *A Cotton Mill*.

Do you know the poems of Jules Breton? I reread them recently, as well as another volume of French poems by François Coppée, *Les Humbles en Promenade* and *Intérieurs*. Those Coppée poems are fine character drawings of *ouvriers*; his "*demi-monde*" too has so much feeling, I think.

Were you so busy working at your Dominican Monks and was that the reason that you did not write?

Good-bye,

VINCENT.

1884.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Herein are a few poems by Coppée, which I promised to send you; "Tristement" reminds me of a poplar-lane by Hippolyte Boulanger, *La Vallée*. I believe there is the same autumn atmosphere in it. I thought you too would like it.

There are many others in the volume, but I chose only a few, here and there.

During the last few days I have made some studies out of doors. I am sending you a sketch of one of them.

My mother is steadily improving; the fracture has knitted, and the cast has been removed, but she has to keep the leg in a horizontal position for at least six more weeks. Yesterday we carried her to the living-room on a kind of stretcher, and in that way we'll be able to carry her out of doors a little later.

I am also sending, with Coppée's poems, an Arabian fable that I found this week in a work by de Lesseps, *Voyage dans le Soudan*. The idea is very fine, and I believe the whole thing to be possible. When we look at them in that way, men do not play a very noble part but, after all, that is often the case, though we must not admit it as being the rule . . . because, does the candle burn for the sake of the moth? . . . If one knew that—well, it would be better to commit suicide by rushing into the flame. But the candle would have to grin at the burned wings. . . . Well, whatever the case may be, it impressed me very much, and I believe that if we knew

all that is latent within us, we might worry about it. At times we are quite disgusted at the behaviour of people—I include myself, of course—but, after all, we will die soon enough, so is it really worth while to hold on to a grudge, even if we know that we are in the right? And if we are in the wrong regarding our opinion about the unworthiness of mankind, so much the worse for us.

I believe the worst of all evils is *self-righteousness*, and to weed this out of ourselves means an eternal weeding job.

This is much more difficult for us Hollanders, as our education is such that we are made to feel self-righteous in a high degree. I had better not talk about this either.

My idea about the drawings, and why I asked you to show them if you have a chance to do so, I would like to say again, is based on circumstances outside myself. I am so often reproached with the fact that I don't sell, and am asked: "Why do others sell, and not you?" Therein lies the constant complaint against me. . . . I answer that I most certainly hope to sell in the near future, but I think the surest way to bring this about is by trying to work regularly, and at present it would be of little help if everyone should try to bring my work under the eye of the public. . . . So you see this question leaves me neither hot nor cold . . . does not bother me much. All my attention and concern is to make progress. Just the same, because of this ideal they reproach me, and because I labour under great difficulties to keep going, I feel I must seize the slightest chance to sell if the occasion arises. So I am prepared to show my work (even if it is of little use) to a few. It would encourage me (perhaps this seems a little foolish) after I had started, to show my work to a few.

Greetings, with a handshake,

VINCENT.

Amice Rappard,

Zich nu nog eenigen den gedachten van Jules Buteux  
als gy ze niet hebt weet el, zeken ze te bysonder treffen  
of te veranderen een paar dagen  
jullen . . . Sainboag het is een shien gescheerd va  
het wuffelvaan nu van ze de beekening van heet - Een  
vuk zoekende naar de kleur van den winteraan  
Doch die is reeds een lende luen - nu - Ein  
~~schuilen~~  
is geworden een ~~hul anders geant~~



E. g. g. g. -

l'émou

### Seule

Les chaumes de velours, sous une poudre d'or  
Bordées d'un trait de feu, nagent dans l'ombre grise  
Par delà les toits noirs que sa lumière frise  
S'incline radieux l'astre de mesp. dor -  
Forme une gerbe et tombe épanchant son trésor  
Et le zénith bleu verse une lumière exquise  
Sur la route ou - parmi les senteurs de la brise  
Chante et bondit la ronde au tournay, entref.

Dans la poussière ardente et les rayons de flammes,  
Joyeusement, les maux aux mains, dansent les femmes  
Mais la plus belle ère, aspire un peu plus loin

Elle est là - Seule - et mord sa lèvre malade,  
Et telle qu'on verrait dans un champ de sainfo  
Se consumer et languir la pâle sensitive





1884.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Herewith a few more poems by Jules Breton in case you do not have them. I feel sure they'll make a deep impression on you. Today, or rather in these last few days, I painted a study of a weaving-loom, of which you possess the drawing. I have been searching, too, for the exact colour for the *Winter-Garden*, but by now it has changed into a *Spring-Garden*, and so it is something quite different.

Greetings,

t. à t.,

VINCENT.

[Here follow van Gogh's handwritten copies of the poems "*Seule*," "*Le Chant du Soir*," and "*Aux Hautes Cimes*" by Jules Breton.]

Now you are going to have a little reprimand and, well, it is this: when I came to see you last winter, you were against "enthusiasm." I mean, you said that Jacob Maris said that enthusiasm was something or other. I think he, Jacob, has, thank the Lord, not applied that to himself in his life. Even if he ever said such a thing—applying it perhaps to a specific case—he has kept on painting under all circumstances. If they had to stop and think whether they were being too enthusiastic, birds would not sing nor painters paint.

You must read "*Les Cigales*"—and—well, I'd better say no more.

1884.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Thanks for your letter, it is interesting to hear that you have decided to finish your picture, the *Tile-Painters*.

I also note with pleasure the fact that you are thinking of coming to see us, which is one of the reasons that I am sending you these duplicates of the woodcuts; I thought you might like to have them rather than to wait for them. After all, when you have looked at them, I imagine you won't feel sorry to own them.

Well, I have taken the *Graphic* portfolio apart and assorted the loose leaves, which I put amongst others.

That's the reason you already have Herkomer's *Low Lodging-House* and some other good ones in this package. I am enclosing some ordinary prints and others that I took out of the books themselves. They are not reproductions but were printed from the original blocks. At last there are a few by Boyd Houghton: *Liverpool Harbour*, *Shaker Evans*, *Mail in the Wilderness*, and *Niagara Falls*. Once you have seen my Boyd Houghtons, the ones from the first year of the *Graphic*, you will grasp more fully what I wrote you of the significance of this master's work. When van der Weele saw them here last week, he was also impressed by them.

All week I have been drawing men with wheelbarrows, which I might use for lithographs; all the same I have no idea of their value for commercial purposes, but I just keep on drawing.

As I already mentioned, van der Weele came to see me last week,

just when I was working from my model, and then we had an art-show of the *Graphics* spread out on the wheelbarrow. A large page by Houghton struck us especially; I think I spoke of it to you. It shows a corridor of the *Graphic's* offices, about Christmastime. The artists' models come to wish them Merry Christmas, expecting gifts. They are nearly all invalids. A man on crutches heads them all, followed by a blind man, who holds on to the tails of the other's coat; Number Two carries on his back someone who cannot walk at all; behind them is another blind chap, holding fast to the coat-tails of the poor devil on the former's back. The next one is a wounded fellow with a bandage round his head; and trailing along are others. I asked van der Weele this question: "Do you think we use enough MODELS?" He answered me: "When Israels came to my studio the other day and looked at my picture of the *Sand Carts*, he said: 'Stick close to work from the model.' " Well, I believe many of the artists would use more models if they were not so hard up. But if we clubbed together with the money we could spare, how much we could do!

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all the artists could combine and have a room where all the models came, as it used to be at the *Graphic*?

*Enfin . . .* let things be as they may, *we must keep each other's spirits up* and *we must encourage each other as much as we can* to go on working—not that we may please the public, the dealers, or the ordinary run of art lovers, but that we may go in the direction of manly strength and honesty. All these things have in my opinion a direct bearing on working from the model. It seems to me that there is at this moment one thing that is rather fatal: people speak about our work as "morbid." This is not imagination on my part; it is a prejudice that must finally be overcome through our combined efforts in fighting it. The artists must not allow the dealers

to be the only ones to inform the public; we ourselves must say our own word to it once in a while. Even admitting that the painters cannot always make themselves clear in explaining their pictures, I believe the seed that they will sow will be better than that which the dealers and their henchmen sow—always after the same pattern and convention.

These thoughts bring me to the matter of exhibitions. It is all right if you wish to exhibit your paintings, but I myself attach decidedly little value to that. I did formerly (I do not know the reason for the change), I used to look at things so differently. Perhaps I have had more opportunity to look behind the scenes in this matter of exhibiting. I do not think it is a question of indifference on my part, but I think many make a mistake in attaching so much value to exhibitions and their results. I do not wish to speak about it further; only this: I myself think it would be of greater importance if the artists would combine into a group to strengthen mutual sympathy and goodwill, to show warm friendship and loyalty to each other, which I would prefer to a society that provides the means of exhibiting their pictures.

Because I see a number of paintings on the walls in the same room does not mean that I am assured there exists a spirit of understanding and unity, a respect for one another's efforts, among the exhibiting artists. . . . This last matter, the existence or non-existence of mutual respect, is of such enormous importance to me that little else can be compared to it; nothing else is essential in the way that this spiritual unity is; and when it is lacking, other factors, however important they may seem, are of no account. I have no desire whatever to do away with exhibitions, but my desire is for a reform, or rather a renewal and strengthening, of the existing societies, and for such co-operation among the artists themselves as would exercise a beneficial influence on the exhibitions.

I was interested to hear that you have started again on the *Tile-Painters*. I should like to know how far it is advanced; everything connected with it interests me; as a matter of fact I am interested in all your work. I am in sympathy with it; whether you intend to exhibit or not makes no more difference than the kind of frame you are going to use.

Well, adieu, and write soon again,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

1884.

AMICE RAPPARD,

My parents join me in asking whether you would like to come and see us one of these days or whenever it is more convenient to you.

My mother is recovering rapidly and is able to sit in an easy-chair in the living-room; she goes out in a wheel-chair and is starting to walk again, etc. She is getting well much faster than we dared hope in the beginning.

Outside, the trees are blossoming—the weather is lovely just now, not too hot for long walks in the country.

A few days ago I sent you three pen-drawings: *Little Ditch—Weymouth*, *Pine Trunks in the Canals*, and *Thatched Roofs*. I thought the subjects would please you. I would have preferred in the execution to see the direction of the small pen scratches in line with the forms, and I would also have liked to have the tone of the masses stronger, so that they rendered the models more closely. I think you will agree with me that I did not purposely neglect the systematic setting up of the subjects, but I had to do it roughly and quickly, for the time was rather short for catching the right effect of the light and shade, and the tone of the scene, and Nature as it was at that very moment—things that we have for only brief moments at this time of year.

I do so hope that you will be able to come soon, and of course you must bring your tools, and the more you bring of your work,

the better. I would like to see again the sketch of the *Women of Terschelling* and the *Little Weaver*.

With kind regards, in which my parents join,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

You might bring your drawings along when you come. We can start on a number of new subjects—if you feel like it. It is always well to let work rest awhile, I find, and if people are not interested at the moment, it does not matter. We can show it to them afterwards again; they might change their opinion when they see it continually. Perhaps some have laughed at it or said silly things—all the same there is a chance that a few may come to care for it, gradually.

I should like to show you my studies in oils.

*Nuenen, 1884.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

It is a long time since I wrote you. First I waited for an answer to my last letter and I suppose the reason it wasn't forthcoming was that you had gone to Drenthe. Then I was very busy myself and could not get round to writing. Do try and find a moment to let us know how things are with you: what you have been doing, and especially tell me how your picture of *The Fish-Auction* is progressing.

I'll continue now about myself. Last summer I saw a house in Eindhoven belonging to a rich retired goldsmith. He collected a number of beautiful antiques, which he sold again. He is an amateur painter and his house is again filled with ugly as well as beautiful pieces of antique furniture, and now he wants to paint the walls of one of his rooms. He wants murals. He has a plan for it, and I went over to see the panels on the walls. There are six, about 1½ metres long and about 60 centimetres high, which he wants to cover with scenes. He intended to paint the Last Supper, and he showed me the plan of the drawing, which was half Gothic and half modern in style. I said to him that, in my opinion, it would be better for the appetites of the diners, since it was a dining-room, if they could look at country scenes of the neighbourhood instead of at the Last Supper; and the good old fellow did not contradict me. Well, after a visit to my studio, I made him some rough drafts of six *motifs* from peasant life: a *Sower*, a *Ploughman*, *Harvesters*,





Harvesting Wheat, 1883-5

Crayon

KROELLER-MUELLER COLLECTION, WASSENAAR



*Potato-Diggers*, a frosty *Winter Scene with an Ox-Cart*, and a *Shepherd*. I am still working on them. I made arrangements with him that the six canvases are to be for myself, but that I am to make them the size of his panels so that he can use them to make his copies from, and he pays me for the materials, the models I am using, paint, and so forth. But the canvases remain my property and will be returned to me after he is through with them. This arrangement enables me to paint them, which I would not have been able to do had I to pay for all materials and other things. And it is work that I enjoy, and I am working hard at it.

It is giving me a good deal of trouble, however, to tell him the things he needs to know while he is copying them. The sketches of the *Ploughman*, the *Sower*, and the *Shepherd* are already finished and of the right dimensions, 1½ metres by 60 centimetres, and smaller ones of the *Harvesters* and the *Winter Scene with an Ox-Cart*. So you can imagine I am not exactly sitting idle.

Have I told you that I have done another *Woman at a Spinning-Wheel* and another *Weaver*?

I received a marvellous book, *J. F. Millet*, by Sensier, and I also bought myself a book by Blanc, *Grammaire des Arts du Dessin*, on the strength of a passage quoted in *Les Artistes de Mon Temps*. This book treats of the same question as the booklet by Vosmaer, but I personally *prefer* Blanc by far. If you care to read the Blanc and also the *Millet*, you can.

Greetings—also from my parents—believe me,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

Nuenen, September 1884.

AMICE RAPPARD,

I am returning the book by Blanc and the one by Fromentin with many thanks for letting me read them. I told you that after reading *Artistes de Mon Temps* I ordered the *Grammaire des Arts du Dessin* by the same author, and if you care to, you may read it.

One day last week I went unexpectedly to Utrecht with people from the village. I called at your house, but did not find anyone at home and could not come back later as I had to return the same day. I was very sorry that I couldn't get a look at your things. I should have liked to see your *Fish-Auction* picture. And they couldn't even tell me where you were, so I presume you are still in Drenthe. At the same time I would have liked to talk with you about your visit with us; perhaps you do or don't want to come. I wrote you about it before, but have had no answer to two of my letters.

Greetings,

t. à t.,

VINCENT.

I have so much enjoyed working on the six canvases about which I wrote you; they are all painted sketches so far, and are already at the house of the person interested. When he has finished copying them, they will be my property and I'll finish them. The subjects are: *Potato-Diggers*, *Ox-Plough*, *Harvesters*, *Sower*, *Shepherd* (storm effect), *Wood-Choppers* (snow effect).

I was tied down a little by the fact that I had to keep in mind certain measurements and, furthermore, the man preferred subjects with, for example, five or six figures where I would sooner have had two or three. But, *enfin*, I have worked at them with real pleasure, and shall go on with them.

Nuenen, September 1884.

AMICE RAPPAUD,

My hearty congratulations on the silver medal you received in London. It gives me some satisfaction to know that I said what I did at the time you showed me the picture. Perhaps you will recall what I repeated again a little while ago. It was on a Friday I mentioned to you that I found in the colour of your painting *The Spinning Woman* something that seemed to me better and bolder than anything I have seen you paint. All the same, *The Little Weaver* is also exceptionally good, as I asserted at that time.

To start a painting in a rather low tone and then to build it up is a very original procedure, and that is what I found in your treatment of *The Spinning Woman*. I recalled to you what you yourself had said to me in one of your letters about that picture. "There is great strength in that painting," you said, and that is something I have missed in your later work.

I am looking forward with great pleasure to your visit here, and I do not doubt that the more you come here, the more the scenery will attract you.

Since your departure I have been working on the *Watermill*—the one about which I inquired at a little tavern near the station. You remember we chatted with a man, whom I told you about as one troubled by the chronic ailment of never having any small change on hand. It is the same kind of mill as the other two that we looked at together. It has two red roofs, which can be seen from the front, and poplars all around it.

It will be very beautiful here during the autumn.

My brother Theo might come over during Whitsuntide for a short time if he has a chance to steal away. I know that he too will be delighted to hear about the award, as are all of us here.

Adieu—soon more—believe me, with a handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

Nuenen, September 1884.

AMICE RAPPARD,

A single word, hastily: my parents have asked me whether I had heard from you with regard to your visit. I said that I knew the time would be around October, but I had not yet the right date. Between ourselves, let me tell you that, although *you are welcome at all times and we expect you at any time*, I believe it would be more convenient at home if you came in *October* rather than in November, because I heard them say they would have other visitors *later*, which is the reason that I myself have to go somewhere in *November*.

You will gather from what I say that not only I but also my parents are looking forward to your visit, and it would be a great disappointment if it should fall through, so much so that I should be very sorry if on account of what I have said you *shortened* your visit.

That my parents spoke about it was more to give *me* a hint that certain visitors were expected in November, people who would prefer not to meet me. I repeat, it was a hint to *me* that they would not be sorry if I were not to be there in November and the beginning of December.

But they as well as I are expecting you most assuredly and we would be very much disappointed if you did not come.

But I have already told them my plans of going on a little trip in November, having in view the fact that I should then not be in anyone's way. So my parents count on this.



So you had better come in *October* and stay as long as *possible*. Moreover, you said you would in your last letter. But *I* must get away during November. It is *very lovely* here, so do not postpone your visit too long. Greetings, with a handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

It is really most inconvenient for me not to be able to be here in November, and I imagine that I shall stay somewhere in the neighbourhood, most likely in Brabant.

But I imagine the visitors have a habit of coming at the beginning of the winter and staying until about Christmastime. That is why I said at once that I intended taking a little trip, *which would not have been my intention at all* had there not been a reason for me to do so.

Something else—if you come, you must come by way of *Eindhoven* and let me know by what train, so I can be at the station to meet you. Then we can go together to see the man for whom I am making those decorations—the six canvases about which I wrote you. The amateur is copying them now, and they are all there. He is quite a nice old fellow; he is a goldsmith and also deals in brass and metal church ornaments. I think, if you leave Utrecht in the morning, you'll be in Eindhoven a little after noon. This will be just the right time for us to go there together, and toward evening we can either take the train or walk to Nuenen.

1884.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Your letter about the drawing pleased me very much. As to the weaving-loom, it really is a study of the loom, made in the mill; from beginning to end it was difficult, for I had to sit so close that it was hard to take the measurements. About the figure I drew in it, I mean to express no more than this: "This colossal black thing, which has become so dingy-looking—an old-oak colour—with all its ribs, stands out in sharp contrast to its grey surroundings; and in the midst of it sits a black ape or gnome or ghost who makes those ribs clatter all day long." I marked that place by a sort of figure of a weaver and made some scribbles and splotches right there where I saw him. Consequently I did not give a thought to proportion of arms or legs.

When my drawing of the loom was finished rather carefully, I could not bear the thought that I did not hear the clattering of the ribs, so I added a ghost to it. Good—and now let this be a machine-drawing, but compare it with a real loom and mine will be more HAUNTING. Besides, it is not a machine-drawing . . . nor anything of the sort (*je ne sais pas quoi*).

And if you put my study next to the drawing of a loom by a man who specializes in draughtsmanship, my work would show that the oak of the loom had become dingy and aged-looking from sweaty hands, and you could not help thinking of the workman even if I had not actually drawn him in the picture or even if I did



Weaver, 1884

KROELLER-MUELLER COLLECTION, WASSENAAR



draw him out of proportion, while nothing like this thought would be conveyed to you by the technician's drawing of the loom. There should come a kind of moan out of those slats.

I should like to see some of your drawings of looms. Why? Because if you draw *only* the wheel, I myself think instinctively of the boy who turns it, and I feel his presence though I do not know how that comes about. And those who look at your drawings of the machine as *models of implements* do not understand anything of your art. But I agree with you that, if we start to make a study of a machine, we should do it as accurately as possible if we want it to be of any value as a study. In the meantime I understand your idea that, if it were a drawing, which I *hope* to make some day if I can get hold of the right model, then the black sprite in the background should be the centre, the starting-point, the heart, the striking feature, and the rest must be subordinated to that.

I was pleased that you liked my *Winter Garden*. This little garden made me so dreamy that since then I have made another with the same *motif*, also with a little black gnome, which really was put there, not as a worthy imitative example of the structure of the human body, but as a *tâche*. I am sending that to you also, and a couple of others, namely, a sepia-sketch *In the Brook* and a pen-drawing *Knot-Willows—Poplar-Lane—Behind the Hedges—Birds—The Ice-Bird—Winter Garden*.

I sent them all in a roll; be good enough to put them in the portfolio with the others, especially when you return them, so that they will keep flat. I am enclosing a piece of grey paper; if you place them against it they will stand out better. Regarding those drawings and the exhibition: The exhibition does not bother me, but what does bother me is this: I am working, of course, every day, and no week passes without my having some studies like these. I always count it as a possibility that one day or other I shall find an

art lover who would like to get them from me—not one or two but fifty. For instance, I know of more than one painter who has to part with his studies (which he would have kept himself if he could have done that, but who had to get money for them, to keep himself going). And if I ask you to show them to people whom you may meet occasionally, it is not altogether impossible that some time you may bring me such an art lover. If that does not happen, all right, but for me, as my life is becoming rather more difficult instead of easier, it is my duty to find opportunities, to look for chances to place my work. Therefore, I ask you to show these studies if it is convenient. If no notice is taken of them, all right, I am prepared for that also. To give a one-man exhibition of my work is something I do *not* desire at all.

As for people who like drawings, among the ordinary public of art lovers, one has always a *chance* to find understanding, and a little trust and faith, but dealers certainly have no feeling or faith; theirs are always the same superficial judgments, generalities, and conventional criticisms—old files on which we only lose our teeth if we try to bite them. So show them sometimes, if there is a chance, but please do not put yourself out, force nothing; as I say again, I have to do it. If I did not *have to*, I would much rather keep the studies for myself and I would not sell them—but, *enfin*. So, greetings to you; I am painting again these days.

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

My thought, at present, is to lay off everything but pen-drawings and painting.

1884.

AMICE RAPPARD,

The package of woodcuts arrived on the third of March. As there was no letter in it, I waited a couple of days to see whether or not you were writing me. I am sending you now, however, a few words to thank you for the package, and I want to tell you that I found several things in it that were new to me. (For instance, *Ghost Story* by Thomas, *Christmas Carol* by Gilbert, the Oberländer *In der Kirche*, etc.) The others I gave to van der Weele, who was delighted with them.

I imagine you are very busy with the picture for the exhibition. When everything connected with that is over, I will be more than ever looking forward to continue our correspondence about lithographs, and also about black-and-white in general. If possible we must arrange to meet; at least we must see each other. I am writing only a short letter this time as I know you must be very rushed. Only this one thing:

What is your opinion about doing black-and-white drawings in the following manner? You make a drawing either with pencil or with charcoal; finish it off as far as possible without bothering about the weaknesses or imperfections of the effect; then, when you are as far as that, you put on a palette a little ordinary PRINTER'S INK, a little Cassel earth, e.g., and some white—oil paint.

Then you mix the colours with TURPENTINE and the printer's ink, which is as thick as tar in its ordinary form (no oil, of course).

Now you start again to attack the original drawing with the brush, in the usual way. I have been trying this these last days. *It goes without saying* that the printer's ink must be mixed with a little turpentine. (And you can make the mixture so thin that you can lay it on in quite transparent washes. You can also use it thick; then it will result in the deepest tones of black.) The principal thing is that you mix them properly, and I am sure that we can do many things with this mixture—*enfin*, I'll tell you more about it later, as I am still experimenting with it myself.

The drawing I am working on at this moment is of a man from the old-folks' home who is standing near a coffin—which is called the "dead-pot."

Adieu, with a handclasp, and thanking you again for what you sent me.

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

Of course, you can experiment, and to simplify it just use printer's ink and turpentine alone, the ordinary kind of printer's ink—none other. You may have some. If not, you can get it at an ordinary printer's shop.

I discovered that it catches on very nicely to the coarse grain of certain paper. This kind they call *papier torchon* (but it is not like the Whatman *torchon*), and Smulders has lately ordered it again in two sizes at 3 florins 75 per quire.



September 12, 1884[?].

AMICE RAPPARD,

Enclosed, I am sending you, with many thanks, 2 florins 50, which you so kindly lent me.

There was a response to my drawings, but I received even less for them than I expected, although my expectations were not above thirty guilders for the seven. I received twenty, together with a kind of reprimand for good measure: "Did you think that such drawings had any commercial value?" You must admit that times are not easy, and such experiences are not exactly encouraging. (And there are so many worse things that this treatment is really royal compared to other experiences of mine. Art is jealous, it demands *all*—not only our time, and our energy, but a very dedication of our selves to it. And then to be considered impractical and what not leaves a really bitter taste in one's mouth. *Enfin*, we must try to carry on.) I answered him that I was not acquainted with commercial values, but now that he told me my drawings had no "commercial value," I had no intention to contradict him or to quarrel about it. I said that I, personally, took more interest in the artistic side of life, and liked to delve into Nature more than into prices, or money-values. I said that, when I spoke to him about the price, I meant to say that I could not give my work for nothing, as I too have to live and, like everyone else, provide myself with a home, food, and so forth and so on. All the same, I told him, I did not want to impose my work on him against his wishes; I was will-

ing to let him have my drawings only if he wanted them. On the other hand, I would reconcile myself if I were to lose his trade. I know, as sure as anything, that he will think my attitude ungrateful, crude, and impertinent!

And no doubt others will also rebuke me when the occasion arises, and they will say: "How badly you treated your uncle in Amsterdam; he meant so well by you, and he was so kind to you; remember how he helped you, and how ungrateful you are with your pretentiousness and lack of understanding. . . . It is all your own fault," . . . etc., etc. . . . It seems that the rich tradespeople are honest, brave, just, and such loyal, sensitive people, while we, poor devils, who sit and draw, be it rain or shine, out in the open country, in the street, or in the studio, sometimes from early morning, sometimes until deep into the night, under the blazing sun, or in the snow—*we are persons without a practical mind, without sensitivity*, above all without manners. . . . All right, I say. . . . This uncle of mine in Amsterdam also told me, with much aplomb, that de Groux was really "*a bad man*." . . . You understand how much this changed my opinion of "Father" de Groux! . . . I said just one thing in reply (and so far my uncle has failed to give me an answer to it—this noble business man!): "*Cependant, il me semble qu'il s'agit bien moins de gagner que de mériter*. . . ." *Enfin*—I talk about it to you because it is like opening the safety-valve of a steam-engine. Otherwise I might feel resentment about the affair, while really there is nothing I wish more than to stop thinking about it, to forget it—but all those people start out with being so nice; they take us in at first, and naturally the astonishment is all the greater at the end of the business.

Well, adieu, I thank you again, and believe me,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

1884.

AMICE RAPPARD,

When I began to collect woodcuts, I was often upset by not knowing who had done them when I could not decipher the monograms, which many English draughtsmen use.

I am not yet quite sure about all of them, but I know a few, and a list of them can possibly be of some use to you, unless you know them.

W.S.	Small	A.H.	Hopkins
c G	Charles Green (there is an F. Green)	H.H.	Herkomer
		GP	P ?
Mee	Mrs. Edwin Edwards	W.B.M	Murray
F.B.	Bückmann	F.W.	Walker
	(you have the <i>London Dustyard</i> of his)		
F.W.L.	Lawson	M.W.R.	Ridley
F H	Frank Holl	S.G.	Gilbert
H F	Henry French	J M (M)	Mahoney (house-
L F	Fildes		hold edition
R C	Caldecott		Dickens—very
E J G	Gregory		pretty)
S E W	Waller	H F	Henry Furniss
A L	Langon	S P H	Sidney Hall
E M	Morin	J D W	Watson
J F	Jules Férat	J B	Barnard
C K [superimposed]	Charles Keene	J T	Tenniel
		D M	Du Maurier

However, often you will find the full names. I am sure to have

skipped some, but these are the ones in my mind at the moment.

I do not know if you know *Scribner's Magazine* and *Harper's Monthly Review*. They always have very distinguished things in them. At present I have only a few because they are rather expensive and one hardly ever finds old copies.

*The British Workman* and *The Cottage and Artisan*, both penny papers of the London Tract Society, are sometimes very tame, but sometimes they are also very strong, with good things in them. I would like to hear more in particular, some time, of what you have, because you must surely have some that I do not own, and I am interested in everything relating to these things. The portrait of Shakespeare by Menzel is something I should like to see sooner or later.

Tell me how your water-colours are getting on. The last few weeks I have been busy with them myself; also with types from the people.

How beautiful it is out of doors. Sometimes I long for a country where it is always autumn, but then we should never have snow, nor apple-blossoms, nor fields of corn stubble.

Will you look to see if at some time you received from me a large wood-engraving lacking the name of the draughtsman and picturing gentlemen and ladies on horseback in a park? I believe it is the Empress of Austria, in whose honour a hunting-party is being given. If you do not have it—although I believe you got it last summer—then I have the duplicate, because I found another one a while ago. Also one by Knaus, *A Hunter*, who is giving his dog a piece of bread.

Speaking of landscapes, I always like Forster and Read even though they are considered old-fashioned. Of Read I have among others an autumn effect and a moonlight and snow scene which are very good.

The English landscape is very diverse in conception. Forster is not like Edwin Edwards, but both have their *raison d'être*. Wyllie and some others are to be looked on as colourists, or rather they look more for tone.

Especially in *Scribner's Magazine* and *Harper's Monthly* are nice things in Wyllie's manner—little marine views, snow effects, and corners of gardens or streets.

In Routledge's Sixpenny Series, among others, is *Oliver Twist*, illustrated by J. Mahoney, which I recommend to you highly, and a *Story of a Feather*, illustrated by Du Maurier, and *Curtain Lectures* by Ch. Keene. But he has nicer ones in *Punch*. Du Maurier is much like Menzel, especially in some large compositions.

Félicien Rops and de Groux did some nice types in a magazine called *Eulenspiegel* while they were in Belgium. I used to have it, and would like very much to have it again; but, alas! I cannot find it. There were things by de Groux that were as fine as Israels. Well, my dear fellow, I must go back to work, but I wanted to send you this list of initials before I lost it again.

Adieu, write again soon, believe me,

t. à t.,

VINCENT.



\*(1885)\*

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1885.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Last Sunday I was at van der Weele's. I saw there one of his pictures, which is by far the best one of his I know. It represented sand-carts beside a canal or *gracht*. It is called *In the Mist*. The *motif*, as well as conception and execution, resembled somewhat the nature of Mauve. I mean as far as style goes, but it did not have enough personality, even though he did try to be original and "peculiar." It was rather large in size. I am writing you this because, in my opinion, van der Weele is one of the "rising men." And I would like you to know him personally. I think that the woodcuts might serve as a means of introduction. Perhaps you can bring him the pages yourself sometime. (I mean Herkomer, and others that you may find.) It may be that I can mention your name to him as the donor, and tell him that you have already seen some of his work, and would like to make his acquaintance—or something of that sort.

*Enfin*, I mean, if you could get in contact with him in one way or another, you might find that you would like to become *friends*.

I sent you today a roll of engravings. They are duplicates from the *Graphic*. I have more, but some of them are not very suitable for rolling up, having been mounted and repaired; besides they are not very important. But they are pages you do not have. *Should you have them*, then I will give them to v. d. W. So you can verify them, and can return them if you have them already. The others

you can choose later on when you come here, although we will need our time then for other matters. So it is better to look them over in this way. Then that will be finished.

As soon as I have time I'll sort out the smaller ones, and will also send them to you for verification. The smaller ones I am sending you now are two Lançons, which, because they are French, I might forget when I send you the *Graphics*, and they will doubtless please you, unless you have them already.

Isn't *Board School* by Holl superb? And *Ploughing* by Small and *Caxton*<sup>1</sup> *Printing*?

No doubt it is also winter weather in Utrecht again.

Herewith, a little scribble from the view outside my window. I always love to sit in the twilight near the fire. It is so cosy to look out of the window on a snowy landscape.

You remember the *Berg-kryt*? I found it in town. I didn't know about it before now, and now I discover that it is not so rare, and most likely you are acquainted with it and have it already. If not, I think it a most distinctive drawing material.

Adieu, my dear fellow, with a handshake and best thoughts; write soon again and believe me,

t. à t.,

VINCENT.

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<sup>1</sup> Van Gogh writes *Claxton*.

1885.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Today I sent you a basket containing birds' nests. I have some others in my own studio. They are thrush, blackbird, yellow oriole, wren, and finch nests. I hope they arrive in good condition.

Do you know much about Eugène Delacroix? I have read a splendid article about him by Silvestre. I will write down a few words that impressed me. The article ended thus: "*Ainsi mourut presque en souriant Eugène Delacroix—peintre de grande race—qui avait un soleil dans la tête et un orage dans le cœur—qui des guerriers passa aux saints—des amants aux tigres—et des tigres aux fleurs.*" These words struck me. The article as a whole pointed out how in his pictures the mood of colour and tone was one with the meaning.

In colour, juxtaposition gives us complementary relationships: from black to white, from yellow to violet, from orange to blue, from red to green. And see this: Delacroix writes to a friend: "*La chapelle où j'ai peint ma Piéta était tellement obscure que je n'ai pas su d'abord comment peindre pour faire parler mon tableau—j'ai été obligé alors de peindre dans le cadavre du Christ les ombres avec du bleu de prusse—les lumières avec du jaune de chrome pur.*" To this the writer adds: "*Il faut être Delacroix pour oser cela.*" Then somewhere else I read: "*Lorsque Delacroix peint—c'est comme le lion qui dévore le morceau.*" The article of Silvestre is all about this point.

What tremendous fellows these French painters are: Millet, Delacroix, Corot, Troyon, Daubigny, Rousseau, Daumier, and Jacque—not to forget Jules Dupré! A new one of the same type is Lhermitte.

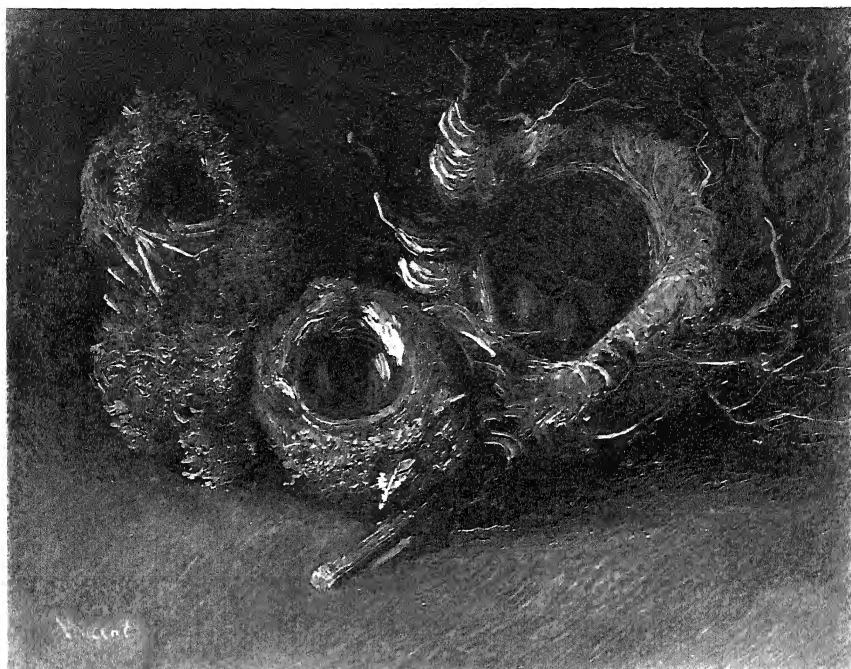
I want to tell you something else about Delacroix: he had a discussion with a friend as to working absolutely from Nature, and he said on that occasion that we have to get our *studies* from Nature, but that the real picture should be done *from memory*. That friend was walking with him on the boulevard when they had that argument, which ran rather high, and when they separated, the other was not quite convinced. Delacroix allowed him to walk a bit ahead of him; then, making a speaking-trumpet of his hands, he called out quite loudly in the middle of the street, to the consternation of the respectable citizens passing by: "*Par cœur! Par cœur!*"

I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed reading that article, as well as another one about Delacroix by Gigoux.

I read a nice book by Bracquemond, the etcher—*Du Dessin et de la Couleur*.

Here follows something else written by Silvestre about Delacroix: "*On dit que Delacroix ne dessine pas—dites que Delacroix ne dessine pas comme les autres.*" They might just as well say that Mauve, Israels, Maris *cannot* draw.

What do you think of the following? The painter Gigoux comes to Delacroix with an antique bronze and asks him his opinion about its genuineness. "*Ce n'est pas de l'antique, c'est de la Renaissance,*" says D. Gigoux asks him what reason he has for saying that. "*Tenez, mon ami, c'est très beau, mais c'est pris par la ligne, et les anciens prenaient par les milieux (par les masses, par noyaux).*" Then he adds: "Look here for a moment," and he draws some ovals on a piece of paper, which he *connects* by fine lines, which are almost



Bird Nests, 1885

KROELLER-MUELLER COLLECTION, WASSENAAR



*invisible*, and develops a prancing horse, full of life and action. "That," he says, "is what Géricault and Gros learned from the *Greeks*."

They expressed first the mass (nearly always oval-shaped) and then the contour. The action should be deduced from the position and proportion of those ovals, and Delacroix says that this was pointed out to him first by Géricault.

Don't you think that this is a splendid truth?

Do you learn that from the *draughtsmen of plaster casts* and in the Academy? I think not. If they gave instruction like that, then I would be enthusiastic about the Academy, but I know only too well that such is *not* the case.

I sent Wenkebach an article by Paul Mantz about the Salon with the request to let you read it when he was finished with it. Have you received it? I thought it was excellent.

I hope that the birds' nests will please you. Birds like the wren and golden thrush can surely be ranked among artists. I think they are very fine for still-life.

Greetings, with a handclasp,

*t. à t.,*

VINCENT.

1885.

AMICE RAPPARD,

I have just received your letter (to my surprise). I hereby return it—with greetings,

VINCENT.

[Following is the letter from van Rappard above referred to. It concerns van Gogh's picture *The Potato-Eaters*, the most important work of his time in Holland.]



Utrecht, May 24, 1885.

AMICE!

*I was pleased indeed to receive a sign of life from you, even if the sign was not entirely what I could have wished it to be.*

*The news of your father's death came so unexpectedly that I was eager for further information, which, however, has not come.*

*If I remember correctly, it was through my superficial way of reading newspapers—skipping the small announcements—that I did not learn of it in the first place from Het Nieuws van den Dag. Anyhow, what I do know is that very, very shortly after the receipt of the formal announcement I called on a friend, who had already read about it in the newspaper.*

*Did you think that I cared so little about your father and that I took so little interest in the happenings of your family that the usual formal notice of so sad a loss was sufficient for my interest?*

*Then you are very much mistaken.*

*In connexion with what you have just sent me, I want to go back for a moment to your last letter, in which you speak about the art of expressing oneself clearly in words.*

*I want to point out to you that even though I express myself badly when speaking, I can do it well in writing, if I take sufficient care.*

*What I wrote you about your manner of working expresses*

*precisely what I meant to express—although I did not take great pains in the matter—with the result that the style was perhaps none too agreeable. I hoped and still hope that I was mistaken about the manner in which you do your work, but that is just why I am so sorry to see, from what you send me, a complete confirmation of my opinion about your way of working; it gave me quite a shock.*

*You'll agree with me that such work cannot be taken seriously. You can do better than that, fortunately, but why then should you be so superficial in your way of viewing and treating everything? Why not study the action of the models? In your work they are just posing. That coquettish little hand of the woman in the background, how unreal! And what connexion is there between the coffee-pot, the table, and the hand that rests on the handle? What is the kettle doing there? It does not stand on anything; it is not held—so what then? And why is the man to the right not allowed to have a knee, an abdomen, and lungs? Or perhaps they are in his back? And why should his arm be a yard too short, and why does he lack half of his nose? And why must the woman at the left have a little pipe-stem with a die at the end, instead of a nose?*

*And you dare, while working in such a manner, to invoke the names of Millet and Breton? Go on, now!*

*Art is too great a thing to be treated so carelessly!*

*Adieu, believe me,*

*Always your friend,*

A. G. A. V. RAPPARD.



The Potato Eaters, 1885

COLLECTION OF V. W. VAN GOGH



1885.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Because of what has happened, I have decided to write to you, not because I like to, but because I want to make myself clear.

There are two reasons for my return of your last letter. Each one in itself, in my opinion, would be a sufficient cause. The first reason is this: I did not like your remarks about my lithograph, even if they were justified. Suppose I could not even contradict them—even then you had no right to ignore all my work in such an insulting manner as you have.

And, secondly, as you have received, not only from me, but also from my family, more friendship than you ever gave, *you can not claim* that at the occasion of my father's death it was *our duty* to send you anything more than the announcement. *Why should I* have written you concerning my father's death when you had not even answered my last letter? Why should I, especially when you wrote to my mother, and not to me, on the occasion of my father's death? It made such a peculiar impression on the family that they were still talking about it when I arrived, and were wondering why you did not write to me. Not that I really care whether you wrote then, or now, or at any other time.

You know that for many years I have not been on such good terms with the family at home. At the death of my father, *I had to do* the correspondence with the near relatives. As soon as the family arrived, however, I withdrew entirely from this duty, and pos-

sible negligence reflects on my family and not on me. And as a matter of fact, I want to tell you that an exception was made with you, for I asked at home if they had sent you a notice, and it seemed they had forgotten to. Well, more than enough has been said about this. The reason that I am writing is not to answer your remarks about those things, also not to repeat the remarks I made concerning what you said about painting. You may reread your own letter and see if you still think you were right. If you really mean that, if you make up your mind to, you can express yourself very well, then the best thing is simply to let you think that.

But to come to the point, the reason I am writing you is simply because (though it was not *I*, but *you* who were insulting in the first place) I have known you so long that it seems a pity to break off our acquaintance for such a reason. What I have to say to you is as a painter to a painter, and as long as you and I paint, things will remain as they are, whether we know each other or not.

The question was of Millet—all right—I'll answer you, *Amice*. You wrote me: "And you dare to invoke the names of Millet and Breton?" . . .

In reply I say simply this for your serious consideration: do not fight with me. You see, I am going my own way, and I do not seek a quarrel with anyone, not even with you. I would let you say whatever you wanted, even if you used some more of those expressions. I wouldn't care a button! Let that be enough for the present. You have often said that I do not pay attention to the form of the figure. It is beneath me to pay attention to it, my dear fellow, and it is beneath you to say such an unwarranted thing. You have now known me for years. Have you ever seen me working in any other way than with a model, and have I ever spared the often heavy expense, although you know how poor I am? What you wrote to me over and over again, not only in the last letter, but in former

ones as well, until I got sick of reading it, was about *technique*, which is the reason that you did not answer my last letter. What I answered, and what I answer again, is: the conventional meaning, which is more and more being given to the word, is different from the true meaning, which is *science*. Well, Meissonier himself says: "*La Science, nul ne l'a.*" *La Science*, however, is not the same as *de la science*. That, in the first place, you will not contradict. But even that is not right, yet. Look at Haverman, for example; people say of him (as you do) that he has so much *technique*. Or let's go beyond Haverman, to many others; they have something that is equal to that kind of knowledge of art which Haverman has. There is Jacquet, of the French artists, who is really better. My reasoning is simply this—that to draw a figure with academic correctness and an even, convincing brush-stroke has little to do with the needs, the compelling needs, in the field of present-day painting. Anyway, less than we think, generally speaking.

If you should say of Haverman that he has much *métier* instead of *technique*, for once I would agree with you. Perhaps you will understand what I mean if I say that, when Haverman sits before a pretty lady's or girl's head, he'll make it prettier than nearly anyone else, I know, but put him before a *peasant*, and he will not even make a beginning. His art, so far as I can see, seems to apply especially to subjects that are not so much needed; it is suitable to subjects that are entirely contrary to Millet or Lhermitte, and it is mostly parallel to that of Cabanel, who, with what I call *métier*, told us little that lasted or helped art forward. And I beg of you, do not *confuse* this with the manner of painting of a Millet or a Lhermitte.

What I said and still say is that the word "technique" is used too freely in a conventional way, and it is not always being used in good faith. The *technique* of all those Italians and Spaniards is

being praised, and they are more conventional, they have more routine, than most people. With men like Haverman, I am afraid that *métier* becomes so quickly routine, and then what is it worth?

What I want to ask you now is—what is really the reason that you have broken with me?

The reason I am writing you again is precisely because of my love for Millet and for Breton, and for everyone who paints *the peasants and the common people*, and I count you among them. I do not say this because you meant much to me as a friend, *Amice*, because, as a friend, you meant very little, and excuse me if, for the first and last time, I say this squarely to your face—I do not know of a drier friendship than yours. And so, in the first place, I am not speaking as I do for such a reason; in the second place, our friendship might have become *greater*.

I do not let any opportunity slip to find models, etc., and I have not been small about the matter, either, keeping my resources a secret; on the contrary, when any painter comes to this neighbourhood, I am always glad to show him around.

You know that it is not always easy to find models who will pose, and I do not mind letting the artists have a *pied-à-terre* here, which, after all, is not such an indifferent thing for artists. And I tell you this because if you wish to paint here you need not feel embarrassed because of this little spat. I live now by myself, but just the same you can stay with me in my studio. Perhaps this sounds a little condescending, coming from me to you, and does not mean a thing to you. Well, that is all right, really. I am so used to insults that they do not even hurt me. A person like you might not understand how cold a letter like yours leaves me . . . and being as insensible about it as a lamp-post, I have no grudge even against you. What I do have is enough clearness and serenity to answer as I do now.



Do you want to break with me? All right.

Do you want to keep on painting here? Then don't be upset about this little bickering in our correspondence. . . .

The things you painted here the last time you were here had, and still have, my full sympathy, and, *Amice* Rappard, I am writing because you worked so damned well that last time, and because I have said to myself: "Perhaps he prefers everything to be as it was."

You must make up your mind. I say this squarely. Besides having all respect for your painting, I have a little fear about you for the *future* somehow, and I wonder whether or not you will keep it up. Sometimes I think, given the social position and standing you have, it cannot be otherwise; you are exposed to many things, and perhaps you cannot in the long run keep up the standard you have at this moment. I mean, as an artist. I do not concern myself with the rest.

I am speaking to you as painter to painter. If you want to look for pictures here, *everything will be as before*. You can come here and stay with me just the same, even if I do live alone, just as formerly. You see, I thought it had meant something to you perhaps, and still might mean something. And I will add this: If you can find something elsewhere that suits you just as well—all right. I have no reason to grieve about it, and then, adieu.

You did not write anything about *your* work, and I did not write about *mine*.

Believe me, do not quarrel with me about Millet. Millet is someone about whom I will not quarrel, although I will not refuse to discuss him.

Greetings,

VINCENT.

1885.

AMICE RAPPARD,

I have received your letter; it is more tedious and drier than ever.

However, as you say in it: "I want to answer your letter at once so as not to strengthen you in your idea that, as far as I am concerned, there exists any idea of breaking," I want to repeat to you again, once and for all, that there is in my house a spare room which is at your disposal as well as at that of other artists who want to come to make studies here.

I want to advise you and Wenkebach, whom I shall see tomorrow, to come occasionally, as there are very many beautiful things to see here. If that means anything to you, all right; if not, it is the same with me, but if you do come, each of us must go his own way.

As regards the lithograph, here is my explanation—I did it altogether from memory on a day that I was working at an entirely new method of procedure, and was looking for new ideas as to how to put it up. It is nothing but a proof, which will later have to be engraved on the stone; originally it was much better, and in the later composition it is painted much better, even if there are mistakes in the arms and nose, about which you flew into a rage. As to the picture, the one I painted, I am not sorry I did it, even if there are mistakes in it. I can't say that your letter of today is of any use or at all necessary. Be assured that when you say that your confidence in me is gone, as well as those other things, I remain quite undisturbed; in saying this of me, you are no different from other

people. I leave those people alone. They may say, think, behave toward me, precisely as they like; that's their responsibility. I am not obliged to listen to that continual nagging at me. My parents, my teachers, the Messrs. Goupil, and all sorts of friends and acquaintances besides have told me so many things for "my own good" (disagreeable things), that in the end the load has become a little too heavy, so now I let them say whatever they like. I take no more notice of it, my friend, and since I started on this policy, I have not gone backwards. I know it, for sure.

In answer I say this: It is true that your work is good, but that does not mean that you are always in the right, my friend, that there are no other roads and ways than yours to attain something worth while. I would, as a matter of fact, like very much to talk to you, but do not conclude from this that I mean to consult you; but it seems we are not getting anywhere, it becomes worse and worse.

As to "self-knowledge," who has it? Here also "*la science, nul ne l'a*"; "*de la science*," as to oneself, one's good or bad tendencies, everyone has them, and I started with saying I had mine. We all need self-knowledge. But do not think, through your lack of it, that you never err, and that you do not often hurt others terribly with your superficial judgments.

I know we all do that, and still we have to try to get on with each other, but since we are speaking of "self-knowledge"—no, my friend, it is of deep regret to me that you started that subject, because I am afraid that is your weakest point, at all events as a man. But, *enfin*, I am going to tell you what I think when I think of you:

As for your work, I think what you are doing at present is splendid; but here is a thought which I have in me—I do not want to hide one thing, as I have known you for a rather long time. There was a time—a little while before and a short time after your

illness—when as a man you were much less matter-of-fact than at other times; you were broader, softer, more liberal, and sincere. Now you are again talking to me just as in former days, the terribly pedantic Rappard of a certain Academy. I am sorry to find that this friend has returned, and I am even more sorry that I have lost the friend of the exceptional period when he had changed and improved. Where and how I observed that? I just try to think. And about his work? Is his work going to be broader, fuller, nobler only for a short time? Do you know the answer to that? This idea of mine is written on only a half-sheet of paper, but it shows that I am sometimes afraid that your work will lose the nobler element. I am telling you this very simply and plainly, I think.

Whatever my mistakes may be, I have a sincere desire to be kind to other people. I put too much heart in my work to be insincere, as you are always accusing me of being. I do not need to take to heart what you say, and I don't, and as to your remarks that I need someone to tell me these things—it may be. But it may be that I myself am the person to do so, and there are many other people who are nagging me just like you; I can do without them.

Greetings, but your letter was not just, on the whole, even if there were details in it that were right to a certain extent.

VINCENT.

You did not write anything about your work, neither did I about mine.

1885.

AMICE RAPPARD,

To my great regret I have not yet had an answer from you. The more I think about it, the nearer I come to the conclusion that I am willing to compromise. So if you care to retract a correspondence which in my opinion is not worthy of you, I once more repeat, I am willing to look upon the whole matter as a misunderstanding and our friendship need not change, but on one positive condition, you must yourself realize that you have made a mistake. As I do not wish, under any condition, to let this thing drag along any longer, I beg of you to answer me within a week. Your letter will tell me your attitude and then I can decide.

If it happens that you do not write this week, then I am not *interested in your answer any more*. Then time will show whether your criticisms of my work and of myself were justified or not, whether they were or were not in good faith.

With regards,

VINCENT.

*Eindhoven, July 21, 1885.*

AMICE RAPPARD,

We must stop our bickering and bothering, in the first place because it begins to look like the dispute between a couple of obstinate clergymen who had different opinions about the geographical position of the road that leads to Holiness. They grew so ardent in their dispute that, at the same moment, each threw his wig into the other's face. The wigs are part of the picture, and how can we, with the best intentions in the world, go on, since we have arrived at the psychological moment and neither of us possesses the indispensable implement in question.

Therefore I am at the end of my wits and I am sorry we started something which we seem to be unable to carry to the bitter end—in the way mentioned above, which would have been the only worthy one.

I really think that the dispute has a ridiculous side, and it might become more and more so, which is one of the reasons I can't continue it any longer. It is too absurd. On your part you have to stop it, too, be sensible. Remember what gets into a man's mind does not always come straight from his conscience. Whether *your conscience* dictated those letters to you, whether it was your *duty* to write them, what does it matter! Laugh about it. As you were sincere in your thought that it was your duty and your conscience which dictated what you wrote, I'll wipe the slate clean from my side as well as yours; so now then—*be done with it*. . . .

There remains the question as to whether you feel like coming here, if your time permits, to make some studies. If such is the case, I'll arrange for you to stay at my mother's house as usual.

With greetings,

VINCENT.

1885.

AMICE RAPPARD,

I met Wenkebach today and spoke to him, and as you had been speaking to him about the difference of opinion between you and myself, I also mentioned it, although not in detail. I gave him to understand that I should like to look upon it as a misunderstanding, but that I cannot tolerate your abuse of my work. Well, I willingly admit that I often, perhaps even very often, make many mistakes, just like everybody else, before I finally get a thing right. . . . All right. . . . Details in your observations as to my work are exact, but not the ensemble, *no*.

W. thought, too, that you would take back what you said. I showed him that if my figures have changed, it is because I have given them more form and made them firmer; that I used to employ a harsher line, but that this made them look so *flat*—which got to annoy me more and more.

Perhaps it is just as well that all this happened, as I think it will be long before you again upbraid me and, as you call it, “waver in your confidence.”

I have had the same disagreeable contacts with a number of people—and for a number of years. Whenever I protested, things became worse, and they would not listen to me. There are my parents, and relatives, Tersteeg, and many people I knew when I was at Goupil’s; they went so far in their disapproval of everything I did that in the last couple of years, instead of wasting my time in trying to convince them (I have so little time to lose), I made short work



of it and turned my back on them. *And I let them think and say whatever they liked, without bothering about it.*

So this affair with you does not stand on its own feet, in case you think so. You have been bullied into it by public opinion. If you can now see that to be the fact, and think it over a little, then I want to state again that it may be a good thing that we have quarrelled a bit. But I insist on my point: I will not let the thing drag along in this way, nor do I want a dragged-out friendship.

Either it is sincere—or it is nothing.

There you have my last word. I want you, frankly, to take back what you said in your last letters, the one which I returned included, and without reservations. This is in my interest, but also in your own, because in doing so you destroy an action which although conceivable was not very much considered by you. So you'll destroy the misunderstanding, which you cannot hold on to in good faith; if continued further, it would become *parti pris* and hatefulness.

So on this condition of taking back what you said in those letters, we can renew our friendship, and because of this argument it may even become stronger and better.

Please send me your answer. With regard to my family, at the occasion of my father's death—foreseeing that the misunderstanding might last for ever—I said for the sake of clarity that my outlook on life and business differed so much from theirs that it was impossible for us to agree in the long run. I wanted to act absolutely as I saw fit where my own affairs were concerned. And as my father and I did not get along at all in the last few years, I did not think I had any right to anything belonging to him. I gave up my share of the estate; I did not want it. This cut short further difficulties with my family as you surely must agree. So that is finished, and we get along well now.

Since I took such strong measures with them, you must understand, please, that, although I am anxious to redress things with you, I am unwilling to admit or to yield to your grievances, and my condition remains: entire withdrawal of your letters, which (even if you were right in some of the details) were unwarranted as a whole.

Greetings,

VINCENT.

1885.

AMICE RAPPARD,

Your letter has just reached me, and the sketch of your picture. It certainly is a beautiful subject, and I have nothing against the composition so far as balance is concerned. Allow me to say one thing, which I would *not* mention if your picture were *finished* and consequently difficult to alter. I mean this: the woman with the rake in her hand in the middle of the picture is all right as far as the placing is concerned; but the raking of the ground in itself is, I think, of little consequence; it takes a *secondary* place, and should not be done by the *principal* figure. Therefore, I would rather see the figure in the middle—in the foreground—carrying stones (which is a characteristic and expressive action for the ensemble of the picture), while the one who is now carrying stones and takes second place in the plan in my opinion, should do the raking.

Is this possible? I mean in the course of the work? If it is not, then consider the question of what you should do, because to my mind this is not a minor consideration, and people may criticize you for not having found a more interesting *action*. I think it is very good that the figure stands upright, and perhaps you *need not* change the lines.

Excuse my suggestions. I don't think it is doing any harm if alterations are considered when the picture is still in the rough stage. I do not think that I am imposing *my* ideas on you. If the

picture is of large proportions, the question of *expressive actions* is of great importance. I know it is asking *a good deal*, but I think that the equilibrium and the lines may lay down the law in this case. Those lines will probably remain beautiful and quiet. *Enfin*—I don't think I am wrong, and it might be done, and as it concerned your principal figure, I did not dare to withhold my impression of it.

If it is not asking too much, I would like you to consider something else. Could you let the woman who is carrying stones do the raking while the other one is putting the stones down, so that they are not doing the same thing? But after all, this would come to the same thing, as there would then be *two bending figures*, but *après tout that is of no consequence*. But do consider my *first* remark.

And now with reference to the picture of my *Potato-Eaters*, of which you saw the lithograph; it is a subject I tried to paint because I was carried away by the effect of the light in that murky hut. The whole tone was so low that the light colours smeared on white paper would look like black blotches of ink. On *canvas* they come out lighter, because of the other forces standing out against it; for example, the Prussian blue, which I put on it without mixing it at all. My own criticism is that I paid so much attention to this that I lost sight of the proportions of the torsos. I did the heads and hands very carefully, and as they were the most important and the rest of the picture practically was in the dark (so that the effect is entirely different from that of the lithograph), I am the more to be excused for having painted it as I did. Anyhow the real picture *differs very much* from the drawing of the rough sketch, which I still have, and which was made in the evening by lamplight in the hut, or rather, the lithograph was.

Another thing I want to tell you is that I have been painting a

number of heads since you were here, and also made many drawings of peasants, diggers, weeders, and harvesters. With it all I was kept quite busy with the question of colour, I mean the breaking up of the colours—red with green, blue with orange, yellow with violet—the combination of the complementary colours, and their influence on each other. Another question into which I am delving daily is the one which you accuse me wrongly of neglecting—to think in the *first* place of the contour of the form of my models, of their big lines and of the bulk, instead of considering these the *last*. I am enclosing herewith a couple of sketches of small compositions, both of which I have painted. I have been working on small things lately.

As I have decided to concentrate on *peasants*, I must of course practise daily with landscapes.

I had just painted a few huts when Wenkebach came to see me.

I have nothing new in engravings except four large compositions by Lhermitte. He is for me Millet the second, in the full sense of the word. I really am just as crazy about his work as about Millet himself, and I think his genius is on the same level.

My brother has just been to see me; he told me about things happening in Paris that please me immensely, for example, the success of the exhibition of Eug. Delacroix. Then what also interested me very much was what he told me about a figure-painter, Rothaler [?], and about Claude Monet, a landscape-painter, a COLOURIST.

But you too will notice that we live rather in an iron than a *golden* age, as far as painters are concerned. I mean it is not easy to eke out an existence. Anyway, as far as I am concerned, it is misery. All the same my courage and perhaps also my strength too are not lessening; on the contrary, they are greater than formerly.

Do not think that you are or were the only one who thought

you had to criticize me so much as to pull me down entirely; on the contrary, it seems to be the only thing that I have experienced so far. Since you are not the only one to speak as you do, I connect your criticism with that of others; and it is one reason for my conviction that there is a purpose in my striving, and I shall go on with it more and more. The reason I started to suggest that you take back your criticism (and remember I did not insist on having *my* way, but gave you *yours*) was not that I wanted to bend your ideas despotically. That was not my intention at all, although you took it that way. Let me note a few details which are perfectly correct. I spoke strongly against your drawings from plaster casts, and I want to tell you squarely I would do it again.

And about other questions—I cannot always keep quiet, as my convictions are so much part of myself that it is sometimes as if they took me by my throat when these questions arise.

I admit that there are mistakes in that lithograph as well as in my other work. But I think I gave too much proof of what I am searching for, for people to feel justified or as if acting in good faith when they refuse to judge my work as a whole or to judge it in a broader sense; they must take into consideration the aim I have in view, that is, *the painting of peasants and their entourage; "le paysage chez soi."*

Well, you call the ensemble of my work EXCEEDINGLY WEAK, and try to show me fully that the mistakes far exceed the good points. What concerns my work, concerns me personally. Well, I will *not* accept that, certainly *not*.

The question of the work, the painting of peasants, is such a hard task that the "exceedingly weak" artists won't even make a start at it. And at least I have made a start, have put down certain fundamentals, which is not exactly the easiest part of the job! And in drawing as well as in painting I have got hold of some very

useful things, more so than you think, my friend. But I always do what *I do not yet know* how to do, in order to learn how to do it.

But I am tired of writing about this. I'll finish with saying: it is a difficult job to paint the people and peasant types, and it would be wise if those who quarrel about it should agree about it as much as possible. In union there is strength, and the thing we really have to fight is not each other but those who try to halt the ideas for which Millet and others battled and prepared the ground, those who still try to obstruct the progress of our period. Nothing is more fatal than fighting within our ranks. And as to you and myself, let us stop it, as our aim is the same; we are looking toward the same goal.

Only my reason for it was that, even if your striving and mine are not *the same*, our courses are *parallel* rather than diametrically opposed, and whereas there are as a rule points of similarity enough, and though I think there will continue to be such, it strikes me that on the whole your criticism was inconsequent in *its application to me*, taking into consideration the character of your own work.

We have this in common: that we seek our subjects among the common people; we penetrate to their hearts, to get our studies to the point of reality. And this is having a great deal in common—and *au fond* I am not at all convinced, be it with regard to the technique either of drawing or of painting, that we are opposed to each other.

I do not dispute the fact that you are ahead of me in many things, but I do believe you went too far.

However, be that as it may, what I think desirable is to remain friends, because if we want that and strive for it, we may be of help and support to each other, and since "in union there is strength," we should be friends.

As far as technique is concerned, I am searching for many things, and my experience is always this: that even if I find some things, there still remains a tremendous lot that I lack. But all the same I know WHY I WORK AS I DO, and I stand on solid ground in my search. Only the other day I said to Wenkebach that I did not know of any painter who had as many faults as I have myself, but that even so I was not convinced that I was radically wrong.

The case with me seems to be like this: the product of two negatives is a *positive*. Take whatever drawing or study of mine you like, preferably one which I myself would show you with particular confidence; now, in the drawing, as well as in the tone and colour, there will be mistakes which a REALIST *would not be likely to make*—actual errors, inaccuracies as to which I am convinced already and which I myself would point out, perhaps more drastically than others would.

And still, even if I do keep on producing work containing errors (errors that appear, chiefly, when they are searched for), I do believe that my work has a life of its own and a *raison d'être* which will out-thunder all the mistakes—given a public with character enough to look at the things *with a reflective mind*.

And with all my mistakes, it won't be an easy task to out-thunder me. . . . I am too convinced of my aim, I know what I want too well; and *après tout* I am too sure that I am on the right track when I paint what I feel, and feel what I paint; I am too sure of being on the right track to worry about what people say of me.

Still, that does sometimes make life difficult for me. I think it quite possible that there will come a time when some people will be sorry about the things they have said of me, about the opposition or indifference with which they treated me. What I am doing against it is to withdraw myself literally, so that I do not see anybody outside of the little peasants with whom I am directly con-



omdat in geval gy met heeft van conventie  
 gy denktelyk als gy meer bekend moet wellyt  
 nog meer brutale dingen zult maken en dan  
 er een ~~geen~~ bepaald gevoelt kan komen  
 met schilderen van de eene uytling tegen de  
 andere - En in zulk een geval kan het goed  
 zijn verschillende schilders ~~van~~ eenbragte  
 handelen. Van een ander kant - Het gelooft niet  
 dat het nuttelooze is van gebieden te wipelen en elken  
 week te zien.



Zieken van de oude. Probelytische naam van de  
 stadia van gisteren.

**Gegruet** - de aanmerking over de  
 handeling van de vrouw in 't midden van  
 nu compositie doet ik me gedrongen. En  
 Consideratie. De gewen overigens vind  
 ik de compositie zeer verstandig en  
 't heel plan sympathiek. Als de Wenkeboch  
 zult wel hem s. v. p. grachten

De juist van mijn eeuwen. Dots van  
 my nu nogal zwaarte. Grof geest van  
 actie - Begeerige - zeldzaam in  
 mijn tijd.

De voorloper van de compositie. De eerste bet  
 het - aanbeveling 39 is van het v. d. is de ~~dat~~ wat veel  
 verheide. Lyden en de compositie. De eerste bet

b. v.

Vincent



cerned for painting purposes. And this will remain my policy—and it is quite possible that I shall give up my studio and go and live somewhere in a hut, so that I won't hear or see those who call themselves the cultured.

When I say to you I want to keep up my friendship with you (and I mean it), it is because I see in you a striving which I esteem highly—you penetrate into the hearts of the common people and you have the will-power to persevere.

When I say to you we can give each other mutual help and support, I say it because I feel that, if you do not give way too much to convention, it is probable—when you are a little more known—you will produce bolder things and there will be a conflict between the pictures of the one trend and the other. . . . And if such is the case, it would be well for certain painters to act united. On the other hand, I do not believe it is useless to exchange opinions and to show each other our work.

Look, here is the third scribble of one of my yesterday's studies.

Greetings, I wish you would seriously consider my remarks about the action of the woman in the middle of your composition; otherwise I think the composition is very nice and I am in sympathy with the whole plan. . . . When you see Wenkebach tomorrow, give him my greetings please.

Yours,

VINCENT.

You see by my sketch that I am taking rather great pains to put action in my little figures, to show that they are doing something, that they are busy.

I think it would be advisable to have at least one figure bending over in your picture. With so many vertical lines in the composition, it may be difficult to give action to the work.



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